CITY HILIGHTS

The Truth Speaks

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Bengal all set to say goodbye to TMC's 'Maha Jungle Raj': Modi

'Bengal will only see industrial progress when its law and order situation improves'

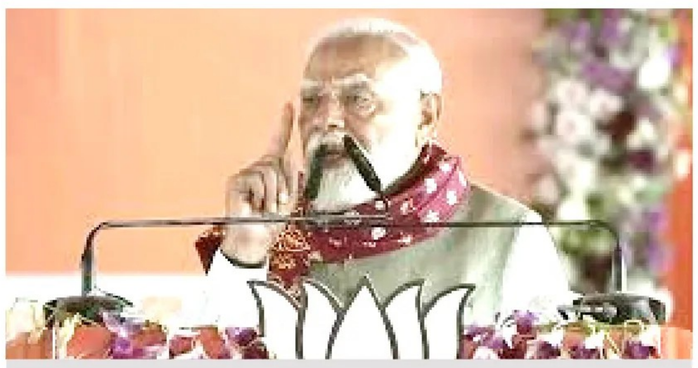
KOLKOTA

The BJP and NDA have stopped the "jungle raj" in Bihar and West Bengal is ready to bid farewell to Trinamool Congress's "maha jungle raj", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said today, throwing an open challenge to the Mamata Banerjee-led party ahead of the Assembly polls this year.

Addressing a rally in Bengal's Singur, the Prime Minister appealed to the people to take a pledge: "paltano dorkar, chai BJP sorkaar (change is necessary, a BJP government is needed)".

"It is a BJP government that installed a statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in front of the India Gate. For the first time, the contribution of the Azad Hind Fauj was honoured at the Red Fort. An island in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands was named after Netaji. The Bengali language got the status of a classical language when you elected a BJP government in Delhi. It is due to the efforts of the BJP government that Durga Puja got the UNESCO World Heritage tag. These people in Trinamool were partners in Sonia Gandhi's (UPA II) government. Couldn't they have got these done? It is Modi who has so much love for Bengal," he said.

The Prime Minister said it is his government that has celebrated Bengal's icons such as Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Swami Vivekananda on the national level. "Because the BJP works on a model of development and heritage," he said. Bengal, he said, has a lot of potential, including larger rivers, a long coastline and fertile land.



Modi to sound the poll bugle in TN on Jan 23

CHENNAI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will kickstart the NDA campaign for the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections from Maduranthakam near here on January 23, BJP legislative party leader Nainar Nagenthran announced on Sunday. Speaking to reporters here, Nagenthran said the prime minister would address a massive public gathering in the afternoon to signal the start of the NDA's electoral battle against the incumbent DMK government. "On January 23, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the NDA campaign in Maduranthakam. He will participate in the meeting to send home the anti-people DMK government currently ruling Tamil Nadu," Nagendran said.

Cong handed over Assam's land to infiltrators: PM

KALIABOR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday slammed the Congress, accusing the party of handing over Assam's land to infiltrators for votes during its rule in the northeastern state.

Modi, while addressing a rally here on the second day of his visit to poll-bound Assam, said infiltration "kept increasing" during the Congress rule in the state for decades, with illegal immigrants "encroaching upon forests, animal corridors and traditional institutions".

"The BJP government is protecting Assam's identity and culture by evicting infiltrators who encroached land," he asserted.

"Infiltrators are disturbing the demographic balance, attacking culture, snatching jobs from the poor and youth, and fraudulently occupying land in tribal areas, posing a grave threat to both Assam and the nation's security," the PM said.

He warned people to remain vigilant of the Congress, as its "only policy is to protect infiltrators and gain power".

"The Congress and its allies are following this approach across the country, and during the Bihar polls, they organised marches and rallies to shield infiltrators, but people there completely rejected them. The people of Assam, too, will give a strong response to them," Modi asserted. The Prime Minister said that the Congress has lost the trust of people as it gives a "message of negative politics", and now, the BJP is the "first choice" of voters in the country.

"Voters trust the BJP for good governance and development. In the Bihar polls, people gave the party record votes and seats even after 20 years in power," he said.

In the Maharashtra civic polls, too, people voted for the BJP and even in Kerala, "we now have a mayor from the party", Modi said.

Iran unrest: Death toll rises to 5K, judiciary hints at executions

TEHRAN

At least 5,000 people have been killed in protests in Iran, including about 500 security personnel, an Iranian official in the region said on Sunday, citing verified figures and accusing "terrorists and armed rioters" of killing "innocent Iranians".

Nationwide protests erupted on December 28 over economic hardship and swelled over two weeks into widespread demonstrations calling for the end of clerical rule - resulting in the deadliest unrest since Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution.

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened to intervene if protesters continued to be killed on the streets or were executed. In a social media post on Friday, he thanked Tehran's leaders, saying they had called off scheduled executions of 800 people.

A day later, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a public speech branded Trump a "criminal" for the casualties he inflicted on Iran by supporting protesters.

MOMENT OF GLORY

Karnataka has secured the second rank in the large States category in the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), earning a Certificate of Commendation from the Union Agriculture Ministry for its performance during the Kharif season 2024 and the Rabi season 2024. ▸ CH PHOTO

Government of Karnataka

In Joint Collaboration of District Administration, Belagavi & Backward Classes Welfare Department and Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna Kshetra Development Authority

Dedication of "Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna Museum (Veerabhoomi)" and

Statue of Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna

Near the lake of Samadhi and Bhoomi Puja Programme of various works

Date: 19th January, Monday. Time: 12.00 Noon.

Venue: Nandagad Rural Education Society Ground, Nandagad, Khanapur Taluk

- **Consrtuction of Sainik School** in the name of Sangolli Rayanna on an area of 100 Acres in Sangolli Village
- **Construction of Museum** at the place of the Banyan Tree in Nandagad where Sangolli Rayanna was hanged **(Veerabhoomi)**
- **Development of lake** near the Samadhi of Sangolli Rayanna in Nandagad
- **Construction of Shouryabhoomi** in Sangolli Village which will depict the history of Rayanna's childhood up to his hanging

Divine Presence

Srimad Jagadguru Sri Revanasiddeshwara Simhasanadhishwara

Paramapoojya Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Dr. Niranjanandapuri Mahaswamigalu

Kaginele Mahasamsthana, Kanaka Gurupeeta, Sri Kshetra Kaginele

Inauguration by

Sri Siddaramaiah

Hon'ble Chief Minister and Chairman,
Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna Kshetra Development Authority

Chief Guests

Sri D.K. Shivakumar
Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Water Resources

Sri Satish L. Jarkiholi
Hon'ble Minister for Public Works and Belagavi District in-Charge Minister

Smt. Lakshmi R. Hebbalkar
Hon'ble Minister for Women and Child Development & Differently Abled and Senior Citizens Empowerment

Sri Tangadagi Shivaraj Sangappa
Hon'ble Minister for Backward Classes Welfare & Kannada and Culture

Sri Byrathi S. Suresh
Hon'ble Minister for Urban Development

Presided by

Sri Vithal Somanna Halagekar
Hon'ble MLA, Khanapur Assembly Constituency

Sri Tangadagi Shivaraj Sangappa, Hon'ble Minister for Backward Classes Welfare & Kannada and Culture & Sri H.M. Revanna, Hon'ble Chairman, Karnataka State Guarantee Schemes Implementation Authority and former Minister on a visit to the Museum

Special Invitees

Sri H.M. Revanna
Hon'ble Chairman, Karnataka State Guarantee Schemes Implementation Authority and former Minister

Sri Ashok M. Pattan
Hon'ble Government Chief Whip, Legislative Assembly

Sri Prakash B Hukkeri
Hon'ble Special Representative of GoK, New Delhi

Sri Bharamagowda A. Kage
Hon'ble Chairman, North Western Karnataka Road Transport Corporation Limited

Sri Mahantesh Shivanand Koujalagi
Hon'ble Chairman, Karnataka State Financial Corporation

Hon'ble MPs of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, Hon'ble MLAs & MLCs, Hon'ble Chairman of Belagavi Urban Development Authority, Hon'ble Chairpersons of various Boards and Corporations, Hon'ble Presidents of Nandagad and Kasaba Nadagad Gram Panchayaths and other dignitaries will participate in the programme as Special Invitees.

As is enshrined in our Constitution to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture is the fundamental duty of every citizen of the country.

All are cordially invited

karnataka information

QUICK READ

Bribery: 3 excise dept officials in judicial custody

Bengaluru

A court has ordered the judicial custody of three people, including an Excise DC and an SP, in a case of demanding a bribe to obtain a CL-7 license. The arrested have been identified as Excise DC Jagadish, SP Thammanna and Constable Lakkappa Ganige. It is learnt that the three had demanded bribe for getting CL-7 license. The Lokayukta police interrogated the three till late at night and collected some evidence regarding the money received. Later, they were produced before the judge along with all the documents. The court, which conducted the interrogation, remanded the three accused to judicial custody and they are lodged in Parappana Agrahara Jail.

Second case of water contamination in a month

Bengaluru

In less than a month, a second case of water contamination has been reported in the city. After Lingarajapuram, this time residents of V S Garden in Rayapuram said they have been receiving water mixed with sewage for nearly a week through their Cauvery water pipes. Senior Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) officials who inspected the pipelines in the area on Saturday said that an illegal connection, which involved cutting the pipeline without permission, had caused the contamination.

Drunk driver crashes car into pani puri shop

Bengaluru

In a shocking incident, a car driver rammed into a pani purí shop under Kamakshipalya traffic police limits at around 9.30 pm on Saturday night. A drunken driver rammed his car into a Pavaní Chaats' paní purí shop in BEL Layout near Byadarahalli. The driver said to have lost control and rammed into the shop. The driver has been accused of driving under the influence of alcohol and ramming into a pani purí shop and shouting at the owner of the chats. The Kamakshipalya traffic division police are investigating the incident.

FIR against Embassy Group for illegal tree felling

The complaint, filed by the Range Forest Officer, B'luru East City Corporation, said that the felling of trees was without permission

BENGALURU

The forest cell of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has lodged a formal complaint against Embassy East Business Park Private Limited for illegal felling of trees in the Kadugodi Reserve Forest area.

This is the second case linked to tree felling in the same forest patch since 2007. The latest FIR pertains to the felling of 110 trees.

The complaint, filed by the Range Forest Officer of Bengaluru East City Corporation, states that the act violates Section 8 of the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act, 1976, which makes unauthorized tree felling a punishable offense.

Although the incident reportedly occurred in December, it has only recently come to light. Authorities claim that the company not only cut down the trees but also transported the timber without approval. The case has sparked concern among environmental activists, who point to a history of similar violations by the same group.

Records indicate that in 2007, illegal tree felling by the company was detected and an

FIR was registered, resulting in a penalty of one lakh rupees. While activity slowed for some time thereafter, activists allege that in 2020, permission was granted by the BBMP Forest Cell to fell 42 trees. This approval, they argue, was used to bypass legal requirements, as cutting more than 50 trees demands public notification and a hearing.

FACTFILE

- Embassy East accused of cutting 101 trees in Bengaluru without permission
- Complaint cites Section 8 of the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act, 1976
- The group faced similar charges in 2007 leading to large scale tree loss

Between 2022 and 2025, hundreds of trees are believed to have been removed under this disputed authorization. The latest complaint has reignited debate over enforcement of environmental laws and the accountability of corporate entities in Bengaluru's rapid urban expansion.

The GBA forest cell has urged strict action, emphasizing that unchecked tree felling undermines ecological balance and violates established legal safeguards. The matter is now under investigation, with further proceedings expected in the coming weeks.

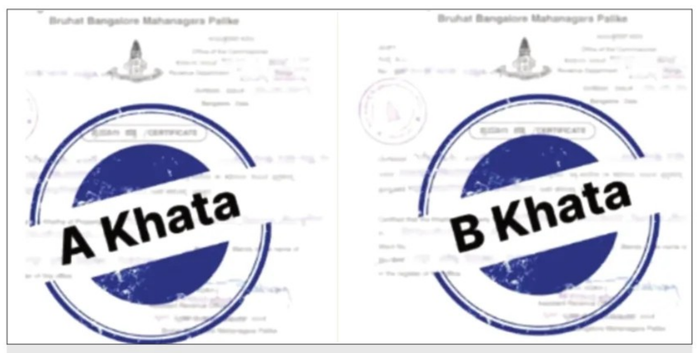
Khata freeze leaves thousands of property owners in limbo

BENGALURU

Thousands of property owners in city have been left in limbo following the freeze on khata services, a move that has disrupted routine property transactions and created widespread uncertainty in the city's real estate market.

Khata documents, which serve as the official record of property ownership and are essential for paying taxes, securing loans, and completing registrations, have been stalled due to administrative and legal disputes between the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA). The freeze has particularly affected bifurcation requests, conversions from B Khata to A Khata, and approvals for vacant plots, leaving homeowners unable to regularise or transact their assets.

Officials have cited jurisdictional overlaps as the reason, with properties developed by the BDA but later handed over to BBMP caught in a tussle over which authority has the right to issue khatas The impact has been severe: residents cannot sell or mortgage their properties, banks are refusing loans against homes without valid khatas, and the city is losing out on significant property tax revenue, estimated at over ₹5,000 crore. Real estate transactions have slowed sharply, with buyers hesitant to invest in properties lacking updated records. While the government has promoted digitisation through e Khata systems, stricter compliance checks have slowed approvals, adding to the frustration of applicants.



BDA defends move

Defending the move, BDA officials said the decision is driven by practical considerations. With unsold properties weighing on its books, the authority sees the change as essential to boost sales and ensure efficient use of housing projects.

Resident welfare associations have demanded urgent intervention, arguing that the freeze undermines both citizen rights and the city's financial health. The Karnataka government is expected to step in to resolve the dispute, but until a clear policy decision is announced, thousands of property owners remain trapped in legal and financial uncertainty, highlighting the urgent need for clarity in Bengaluru's property governance.

BDA plans to ease residency norms for flat allotment

The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) is considering a major relaxation in its domicile rules for housing allotments. The proposal seeks to reduce the mandatory residency requirement in Bengaluru from 10 years to just two, a move aimed at clearing unsold flats and widening the pool of eligible applicants.

According to officials, the plan is under active discussion but has not yet been formalized as a government order. If approved, applicants will only need to provide proof of two years' residence in the city, along with a valid Bengaluru address and Aadhaar card. The revised eligibility would apply to both Karnataka residents and individuals from other states.

BDA clarified that it currently has no pending applications for houses, with all earlier requests already processed. The authority believes easing the criteria will help attract more buyers and support urban development by reducing the backlog of unsold inventory.

However, the proposal has sparked criticism from some long time residents. They argue that lowering the residency norm could disadvantage Bengalureans who have lived in the city for decades, while opening opportunities for 'outsiders.'

If implemented, the new policy could significantly reshape Bengaluru's housing market by making BDA flats accessible to a broader segment of applicants.

MUD, MICROBES AND MAPS

Makkala Hubba turns Freedom Park into playground of discovery

BENGALURU

Freedom Park looked less like a conventional festival venue and more like a living classroom over the weekend, as Makkala Hubba, the children's segment of Bengaluru Hubba, drew families into a series of immersive, hands-on experiences designed to spark curiosity among the young lot.

One of the most striking installations was Phytoplankton World, a glow-in-the-dark immersive space designed by the Museum of Goa that transported children and adults into an imagined underwater world. Using UV lights, neon paints and tactile elements, the installation introduced visitors to phytoplankton. Enlarged visual forms inspired by microscope imagery surrounded visitors, while facilitators explained how these tiny organisms influence marine life, coral health and even fossil fuels.

For many children and adults who said they never saw the ocean up close, the experience offered a rare sensory glimpse into an underwater ecosystem. Just as compelling was a suspended forest canopy installation that recreated a natural play space rarely accessible to city children. Dried foliage, grasses and shrubs hung overhead, while a soft bed of red earth below invited children to sit, sift and play freely. Children rolled, crawled and played in mud without hesitation.

Several parents described it as a rare opportunity for their children to engage with nature without rules or screens. Elsewhere, the festival quietly revived forgotten practices. In a blue-themed room, children were encouraged to write postcards, stamp them and drop them into a post box with help from their parents, introducing them to tactile forms of communication. Nearby, a giant floor puzzle of Bengaluru challenged children to piece together neighbourhoods using clue-based prompts.

I loved the puzzle as I managed to find Indiranagar and Koramangala and place them in their shapes.

'Only conditional permission given for matches at Chinnaswamy'

BENGALURU

The IPL will be held in March. In the meantime, short-term conditions must be met. For this, Home Minister G Parameshwara clarified that we have given conditional permission to organize matches at Chinnaswamy Stadium.

The Home Ministe responded to the media near his Sadashivanagar residence regarding the Home Department's permission to organize a cricket match at Chinnaswamy Maidan. Justice D Cunha had formed an inquiry committee and asked them to inspect the stadium. He had given many recommendations. Accordingly, we discussed this in the cabinet and formed a committee of officials. He said that we have sent Justice D Cunha's recommendations to the KSCA and asked them to fix this.

We had formed a Maheshwar Rao committee to study its status. They had given a report. The new KSCA committee had assured us that we would fulfill the conditions. They have given a written statement after discussing it in the cabinet and fulfilling the conditions in the long and short term. We will review it. We have confidence in them. The work has already started. They are working on the gate of Chinnaswamy stadium, I saw them on my way, the Minister said. Responding to the issue of Rajiv Gowda not being arrested, he replied that we have formed a team and have given instructions to find him. The Chief Minister also said so on Saturday. The Chief Minister spoke about the alarming increase in drugs in the state and instructed the Chief Minister to be careful.

Rly police seek more security measures at stations

BENGALURU

Government Railway Police (GRP) Bengaluru division called for more security measures, such as CCTV cameras, at railway stations after a passenger was sedated and robbed at SMVT station this month.

The 21-year-old passenger's jewellery and cash worth Rs 35,000 were stolen on a train while he was unconscious. Police tracked down the robbers on Jan 7, five days after the incident, primarily due to CCTV evidence. According to GRP, two suspicious individuals were found loitering at SMVT station near Sanghamitra Express train.

The complainant recognised them from CCTV footage at the station, leading to suspicion of their involvement in the case. They were brought to the station for interrogation, where they confessed. They were arrested, and Rs 2,600 cash, gold locket with a Hanuman idol, 18-gram gold chain, 8-gram gold ring, 2 Vivo mobile phones and 23 tablets used to sedate passengers were seized," GRP said. To enhance security at stations, we asked the railways, including the board, to enhance security by installing more CCTV cameras at stations, said Sara Fatima, GRP Superintendent of Police, Bengaluru division.

SMVT terminus, which primarily caters long-distance trains, was among those stations where several cases of robbery were reported. Four million passengers use the station every year, according to South Western Railway (SWR). Similar incidents were reported at other railway stations as well. Passengers shouldn't consume food or beverages offered by strangers and be extra careful with their belongings, Fathima said.

VTU's single-window internship portal raises concerns over cost

BENGALURU

Visvesvaraya Technological University's (VTU) internship portal, rolled out to streamline the newly introduced four-month mandatory internship for seventh-semester engineering students, has drawn sharply divided reactions from students, parents, and colleges.

The portal was launched as a single-window platform to connect students with companies and curb fraudulent internship certificates. Colleges were directed to ensure that students select internships only through the VTU portal, and that even independently secured internships require prior approval from the university.

For many students, that rule has become the flashpoint. Several students raised concerns that the internships they personally fetched were rejected by VTU, and they were asked to select companies only from the portal. My daughter cleared three interview rounds at a startup and received an offer letter. But when the college uploaded her details, VTU rejected it," said the father of a Bengaluru-based engineering student. She's now so frustrated that she plans to randomly choose a paid internship from the portal just to finish the requirement. Other students echoed similar experiences, claiming that internships from well-known companies fetched by them were turned down, with colleges advising them to pick firms listed on the portal instead.

However, S Vidyashankar, Vice-Chancellor (VC) of VTU, said colleges should upload relevant documents related to the company and the internship to prove its authenticity.

PROTECT HERITAGE SITE

Sports complex plan at Jakkur Aerodrome sparks outcry

BENGALURU

Bengaluru's historic Jakkur Aerodrome, home to the Jakkur Flying Training School (JFTS) since 1949, faces an uncertain future after the Karnataka government quietly cleared a proposal to build an international sports complex on its 205 acre premises. The move, described as secretive, has raised concerns among aviation experts and heritage advocates.

The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on November 6, 2025. Unlike other resolutions, the government did not publish details of the agenda or outcome, fuelling criticism over the lack of transparency. The Department of Youth Empowerment and Sports, custodian of the aerodrome, has now been tasked with preparing plans and submitting them to the Karnataka High Court.

The secrecy is significant because the land was originally granted by the Maharaja of Mysore specifically for aviation purposes. In addition, a 2017 High Court order had directed that only flying related activities be permitted at the site. Despite these restrictions, the government is pushing ahead with its proposal.

Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh, in a letter dated December 20, 2025, questioned delays in implementing the Cabinet's decision and instructed officials to present a sketch of the proposed complex to the court. Sources indicate that facilities such as a mini golf course, tennis courts, and a convention centre are part of the plan. Observers note that the move could also benefit real estate developers in the area, who have long been constrained by air traffic restrictions.

Annual Friendship Meet 'Utsav-2026' to Be Held on Jan 21

Gajendragad's Anndaneshwar PU College will host Utsav-2026, marking the annual culmination of student activities

GAJENDRAGAD

Gajendragad is all set to witness a vibrant academic and cultural celebration as Sri Anndaneshwar Commerce and Science Pre-University College, located near Purtageri Cross in the city, organizes its annual friendship meet and collective activities valedictory programme titled 'Utsav-2026' on January 21. The programme will commence at 11 am within the college premises and is expected to bring together academicians, education administrators, students, and community leaders.

The event is being organised as the formal conclusion of the institution's various academic, co-curricular, and collective activities conducted throughout the year. The programme will be held under the divine presence of Muppina Basavalinga Swamiji of Halakeri Anndaneshwar Institution Math, who also serves as the president of the Anndana Vijaya Vidya Prasaraka Samiti. The college chairman Veerayya V. Vastrad will preside over the function, while former minister Amaregouda L. Patil Bayyapur will inaugurate the celebrations.

Adding academic depth to the occasion, Shivanand Kallur, lecturer at Government PU College, Gadag, will deliver a special lecture on the topic The Contribution of Science to Contemporary Society. His address is expected to highlight the relevance of scientific thinking and innovation in addressing modern social challenges.

Several eminent guests from the education sector and social organizations will grace the occasion. Among them are the Deputy Director of the Gadag District Pre-University Education Department Siddaling Bandu Masanayak, Deputy Director of District School Literacy R. S. Buradi, senior physician Dr. G. K. Kale, who is also the administrator of the Vidya Prasaraka Samiti, along with general secretary Ravindranath Doddameti, educational advisors, management committee members, representatives of the Veerashaiva Lingayat community, journalists' association office-bearers, and other distinguished invitees.

The programme will also feature the inauguration of a newly established practical examination centre, a farewell ceremony for second-year PU students, and felicitation of achievers who have excelled in academics and extracurricular fields. Following the formal proceedings, students will present a series of cultural programmes showcasing their talent and creativity.

QUICK READ

Fire Breaks Out at Dabba Shop near Vidyagiri JSS

Dharwad

A fire incident late created a tense situation near Vidyagiri JSS in Dharwad, after flames broke out at a small dabba shop located in the busy locality. The sudden blaze sparked panic among local residents, many of whom rushed out of their homes fearing that the fire might spread to nearby residential buildings. According to preliminary information, the fire erupted unexpectedly at the dabba shop, which is frequented by students and locals for affordable meals. Thick smoke and rising flames were noticed within a short span of time, alarming people in the surrounding area. The exact cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained, though locals suspect it may have been triggered by a cooking gas leak or an electrical short circuit inside the shop.

Light Rainfall Likely in North Karnataka as Temperatures Rise

Dharwad

According to the weather forecast issued by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, in coordination with the India Meteorological Department (IMD), New Delhi, a gradual rise in atmospheric temperatures is expected during the second fortnight of January 2026. This change is attributed to the northward movement of the sun, a seasonal transition that typically marks the end of intense winter conditions over large parts of India. Meteorological experts noted that while daytime temperatures are likely to increase, weather conditions will remain unstable in several regions. The forecast indicates the possibility of cloudy skies accompanied by light rainfall in parts of North Karnataka over the coming fortnight.

Ashwini Puneeth Rajkumar visited Hubballi offering prayers at the revered Siddharoodha Mutt in North Karnataka

Ashwini Puneeth Rajkumar Offers Prayers at Siddharoodha Mutt

HUBBALLI

Hubballi witnessed a moment of quiet devotion and reverence as Ashwini Puneeth Rajkumar, wife of late Kannada film superstar Puneeth Rajkumar, offered prayers at the historic Siddharoodha Mutt in North Karnataka. Her visit drew the attention of devotees and admirers alike, reflecting the continued respect and affection the Rajkumar family commands across the state.

Upon her arrival at the Mutt, Ashwini Puneeth Rajkumar paid her respects to Siddharoodha Swamiji, one of the most revered spiritual figures in the region, whose teachings continue to inspire millions. She also offered prayers to Gurunath Ruddha, seeking blessings in an atmosphere marked by spirituality and calm. The visit was carried out with simplicity, in keeping with the family's long-standing tradition of humility and devotion.

The Siddharoodha Mutt in Hubballi is regarded as an important spiritual centre in North Karnataka and attracts devotees from across the state and beyond. Ashwini's presence at the Mutt was seen by many as a continuation of the deep spiritual inclination that both she and her late husband shared. Puneeth Rajkumar, fondly remembered as Power Star, was known not only for his contributions to Kannada cinema but also for his philanthropic activities and spiritual values.

Local devotees and members of the Mutt administration welcomed Ashwini Puneeth Rajkumar and facilitated her darshan. While there was no formal public address, her visit carried emotional significance for fans of Puneeth Rajkumar, many of whom continue to hold the actor in high regard even years after his passing. Several devotees expressed that seeing Ashwini at the Mutt reaffirmed the family's strong cultural and spiritual roots.

The visit comes amid Ashwini Puneeth Rajkumar's continued involvement in charitable and social initiatives through the Puneeth Rajkumar Foundation, which focuses on healthcare, education, and social welfare. Her presence at the Siddharoodha Mutt was viewed as a personal spiritual moment rather than a public event, underscoring her preference for understated faith and service.

Satish Jarkiholi Clarifies Chief Ministerial Aspirations

DAVANGERE

Karnataka Minister Satish Jarkiholi has categorically stated that while his supporters may raise slogans projecting him as the next Chief Minister, such aspirations are aimed at the 2028 Assembly elections and not the present term. Addressing the media during his visit to Davanagere district, the senior Congress leader sought to put an end to speculation surrounding an immediate leadership change in the state.

Speaking to journalists, Jarkiholi explained that slogans declaring him as the next Chief Minister stem purely from public affection and support. People shout such slogans out of their admiration for me. We have clearly said that it is not for this term, but for the 2028 elections, he remarked. He stressed that he has never claimed the Chief Minister's position for the current period and reiterated that his ambition is aligned with the next electoral cycle.

The minister further appealed for restraint in discussing leadership changes at this juncture, pointing out that the Congress party has important political responsibilities ahead. At present, there are crucial elections such as the Assam Assembly polls and the Greater Bengaluru elections. This is not the right time to indulge in debates about a change in the Chief Minister, he said. He added that both the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister are burdened with extensive administrative and political work, which often requires frequent visits to New Delhi.

Minister Satish Jarkiholi clarified that public slogans hail him as next Chief Minister for 2028, not current tenure

Jarkiholi also underlined that any decision related to leadership ultimately rests with the Congress high command. Whatever happens, the final call will always be taken by the party leadership, he asserted, attempting to quell internal speculation and media-driven narratives.

The minister was in Channagiri taluk of Davanagere district to attend a programme at Pandomatti village when his supporters once again raised slogans projecting him as the future Chief Minister. Enthusiastic supporters held hand posters and banners proclaiming Next CM Sahukar Jarkiholi, while some even wore T-shirts printed with his photograph. The slogans were raised in his presence, reflecting his growing grassroots support.

Despite the public display of enthusiasm, Jarkiholi maintained a measured tone, reiterating that his focus remains on party responsibilities and future electoral preparations.

Women Police Force Launched to Strengthen Protection for Women

DHARWAD

In a significant step towards strengthening women's safety and community-based policing, the Karnataka state government has initiated the Akka Pade (women police force) across all districts to ensure immediate response and protection for women in distress. In line with this initiative, the Dharwad District Metropolitan Police Department officially launched the Akka Pade with a dedicated vehicle to enable swift mobility and rapid intervention. The Akka Pade in Dharwad was inaugurated by District Incharge Minister Santosh Lad and Deputy Commissioner Divya Prabhu. The launch marks a crucial milestone in the district's efforts to enhance safety mechanisms for women and children, especially in vulnerable situations requiring immediate assistance.

MLA N.H. Konareddy Condoles Demise of Former Minister

HUBBALLI

Legislator N. H. Konareddy has expressed deep grief over the demise of former minister Dr. Bhimanna Khandre, conveying his condolences through a message shared on social media. The death of the veteran leader has triggered widespread sorrow across political circles and among the general public, especially in North Karnataka.

In his condolence message, Konareddy described Dr. Khandre as a committed public servant who devoted his life to the welfare of the people. He recalled the former minister's dedication to social justice, grassroots development, and inclusive governance, stating that his contributions left a lasting imprint on Karnataka's political and social life.

Calling the loss irreparable, Konareddy said Dr. Khandre's service-oriented approach, administrative experience, and compassion for the underprivileged would always be remembered. He extended heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved family and prayed for the departed soul to attain eternal peace.

Leaders from different political parties, social organisations, and well-wishers also took to social media to express their condolences, reflecting the respect Dr. Khandre commanded across ideological boundaries. Many remembered him as an accessible leader who maintained close contact with the people and addressed local issues sincerely. During his long political career, Dr. Khandre served in several capacities and was widely known for his calm demeanour and effective problem-solving skills. His efforts to strengthen public institutions and promote regional development earned admiration from colleagues and constituents alike. Citizens fondly recalled his initiatives supporting infrastructure, education, and healthcare.

Konareddy's message resonated strongly in Hubballi, where discussions on Dr. Khandre's legacy continued widely.

Quiz Competition for SSLC Students Scheduled on Jan 21

GAJENDRAGAD

As part of the Republic Day celebrations, Sri Annadaneshwar Commerce and Science Pre-University College, located near Purtageri Cross in Gajendragad city, has announced the organisation of a special quiz competition for SSLC students from recognised high schools. The competition will be held on Wednesday, January 21, beginning at 10 am on the college campus, with the aim of encouraging knowledge, teamwork, and a healthy competitive spirit among students.

According to college authorities, each participating school may send one team consisting of four students. Students are strictly prohibited from representing more than one school, ensuring fairness and equal opportunity for all institutions taking part in the event.

To motivate enthusiastic participation, attractive cash prizes have been announced. The first prize winner will receive ₹5,000, while the second, third, and fourth prize winners will be awarded ₹3,000, ₹2,000, and ₹1,000 respectively. There is no entry fee for the competition, making it accessible to students from all backgrounds.

Registration will be conducted at the venue on the same day between 9 am and 10 am. A preliminary written test will be held at 10:30 am and will consist of 60 multiple-choice questions to be answered within one hour using the OMR system. Based on performance, the top four teams will qualify for the final round. The judges' decision will be final binding.

Leopard Scare Returns to Hubballi as Big Cat Attacks Livestock

HUBBALLI

Hubballi city is once again on edge following reports of a leopard attack on livestock, raising renewed concerns about human-wildlife conflict in and around urban limits. The latest incident has intensified fear among residents, particularly those living on the outskirts of the city, where forested patches and open fields border residential localities.

According to local sources, the leopard allegedly attacked domestic animals during the night hours, leaving villagers alarmed. The incident came to light when residents found injured or killed livestock in the morning, prompting immediate alerts to the forest and police departments. Though no human injuries have been reported so far, the recurring presence of the big cat has caused widespread anxiety.

This is not the first time that Hubballi has witnessed leopard-related incidents. Over the past few years, sightings and attacks on livestock have been reported intermittently, especially in areas close to agricultural land, abandoned plots, and green cover. Residents fear that increasing urban expansion and shrinking forest habitats are forcing wild animals to stray closer to human settlements.

Forest department officials rushed to the spot after receiving information about the attack. Preliminary assessments suggest that the animal involved is likely a leopard that has been moving across the fringes of the city in search of prey. Officials have intensified patrolling in vulnerable areas and installed camera traps to track the animal's movement and confirm its presence.

Authorities have advised residents to remain cautious, especially during early morning and late evening hours. People have been urged not to venture out alone at night, secure their livestock in enclosed sheds, and immediately report any sightings or suspicious movements to the forest department. Schools in nearby localities have also been advised to take precautionary measures until the situation is brought under control.

HUBBALLI CYBER FRAUD

₹3.89 Lakh Stolen after Bank Account Details Obtained

HUBBALLI

Hubballi city has reported yet another case of cybercrime, where fraudsters managed to obtain sensitive bank account information and steal a sum of ₹3.89 lakh, raising serious concerns about digital financial safety among residents. The incident has once again highlighted the growing threat of online frauds targeting unsuspecting citizens through deceptive means.

According to police sources, the fraud came to light after the victim noticed unauthorized transactions from their bank account. Preliminary investigations suggest that the accused fraudsters gained access to crucial bank details by misleading the account holder, possibly through a fraudulent phone call, message, or fake online link. Once the information was obtained, the accused swiftly transferred ₹3.89 lakh from the victim's account without authorization.

The incident occurred within the limits of Hubballi, a major commercial and educational hub in North Karnataka. The victim immediately approached the police after realizing the financial loss. A formal complaint has been registered at the concerned police station, and a case has been booked under relevant sections of the Information Technology Act and the Indian Penal Code dealing with cheating and cyber fraud.

Police officials stated that cybercrime teams have begun an investigation and are working to trace the digital trail left by the accused. Bank transaction records, call details, and IP addresses are being examined to identify the perpetrators. Officials also confirmed that efforts are being made to coordinate with the bank to freeze the transferred amount, though recovery depends on how quickly the funds were withdrawn or moved to other accounts.

Authorities have urged citizens to remain vigilant and avoid sharing bank account details, OTPs, PIN numbers, or personal information with unknown callers or through suspicious links. Fraudsters often pose as bank officials, customer care executives, or representatives of government schemes to trap people. One must verify before responding to such calls or messages, a police official said.

This case adds to the increasing number of cybercrime incidents reported in Hubballi-Dharwad in recent months. Police have reiterated the importance of cyber awareness and advised people to immediately report any suspicious communication or unauthorized transactions to both the bank and the cybercrime helpline.

QUICK READ

Court Fines Man, Imposes Jail for Cheque Bounce

Hunsur

In a recent case at the Principal Senior Civil and JMFC Court in Hunsur, a man was fined ₹2,60,000 for issuing a dishonoured cheque, with a three-month imprisonment clause if the fine is not paid. The complainant, K. Krishna, son of Kenchaiah and a resident of Kalkunike Housing Board Colony, filed the case against Ashwath, son of Nasi Jogesh from Vaddaragudi, H.D. Kote. Ashwath had borrowed money from Krishna and issued a cheque as repayment security. The cheque was dishonoured, prompting Krishna to approach the Hunsur court with a complaint of cheating. After considering arguments from both sides, Principal Senior Civil and JMFC Judge Smt. Bhagyamma ruled on January 13, 2026, that the accused must pay the fine. If he fails, he will serve three months in jail.

Children Should Educate Parents on Road Rules: Tyagaraj

Hunsur

Children should advise their parents to follow road safety rules, said Transport Department Inspector Tyagaraj. He added, "Children must ensure that road rules are followed right from home. Millions of people lose their lives every year due to traffic rule violations. This leads to family problems and increases the risk of children being deprived of education." Tyagaraj, the chief guest at the celebratory program organized at Hunsur Government Senior Primary Boys' School, explained the precautions children should take while on the road and marked the observance of Road Safety Week. The school's headmaster Dr. Madupasad and the teaching staff organized these activities as part of the extracurricular program set by the Education Department.

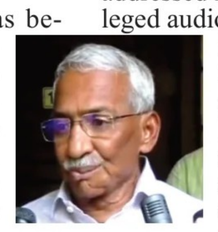
Lokayukta Takes Excise DC, Superintendent into Custody

Lokayukta police detained two senior excise officials in a bribery case, prompting strong reactions from Minister Timmapur

BAGALKOT

In a major development in the Excise Department bribery case, the Lokayukta police took Excise Deputy Commissioner Jagadish Naik and Superintendent Tammanna into custody. The action follows allegations of bribery and misuse of authority, once again bringing the issue of corruption within government departments into sharp focus.

Reacting to the arrests, Karnataka Excise Minister R. B. Timmapur addressed the media in Badami, located in Bagalkot district. The minister acknowledged that repeated incidents of corruption have surfaced in certain departments and pointed out that officials at both lower and higher levels have been caught by the Lokayukta in recent times.



Timmapur said it has become a common practice for some officials to misuse names of ministers or senior authorities to extort money. "Whenever officials misuse someone's name, they collect money by claiming it has to be given to ministers or higher-ups. This is not limited to one department; similar incidents have taken place elsewhere too," he said.

Referring specifically to the present case, the minister stated that an official from his department had been caught in a similar manner. He also addressed reports about an alleged audio recording involving Superintendent Tammanna. "There are claims that Tammanna has spoken something and that an audio exists. I have not heard it and I am unaware of its contents. Let it be verified properly," he remarked.

Clarifying the administrative structure, Timmapur said that Tammanna had no authority or role related to official logins. "He is not an authorised person. He only visits the Deputy Commissioner's office and the Commissioner's office. Earlier, there were around 10 to 12 logins, which we reduced to six or seven to curb corruption," the minister explained.

He asserted that strict action must be taken against anyone found guilty of misusing names or accepting bribes. "If anyone has taken money wrongly, they must face action immediately. Anyone who eats salt must drink water," he said, underlining accountability in public service.

Officials Review Voter List Mapping Work

Shivamogga district officials reviewed voter list mapping work and directed BLOs to improve progress within a week

SHIVAMOGGA

In a move to accelerate election-related preparatory work, the District Administration of Shivamogga convened a review meeting with Booth Level Officers (BLOs) of the 112–Bhadravati Assembly constituency, focusing on the Mapping and Progeny verification of voter data. The meeting was chaired by the Deputy Commissioner of Shivamogga district along with the Sub-Divisional Officer, Shivamogga.

The review centred on the comparison and mapping of the 2002 Special Intensive Revision (SIR) voter list with the updated 2025 electoral roll. Officials expressed concern over the slow pace of work in certain booths and identified BLOs whose progress was found to be below expectations. The Mapping & Progeny process is considered crucial for ensuring accuracy, continuity, and integrity of the electoral database, particularly in identifying duplications, omissions, and demographic changes over time.

During the meeting, officials issued clear instructions to all BLOs showing low progress to significantly improve their performance within the next one week. They emphasized that the task is time-bound and directly linked to the smooth conduct of future elections. BLOs were directed to intensify field verification, coordinate with local residents, and ensure that all eligible voters are accurately reflected in the updated rolls.

The District Administration also issued a stern warning, stating that failure to achieve satisfactory progress within the stipulated one-week period would invite appropriate disciplinary action against the concerned BLOs. "Accuracy and timeliness in electoral work are non-negotiable. Any laxity will be viewed seriously," officials reportedly cautioned during the meeting.

Officers further instructed BLOs to submit daily progress reports and seek guidance promptly in case of operational challenges. Supervisory staff were asked to monitor the work closely and provide necessary support to field teams to avoid delays.

The administration reiterated its commitment to maintaining a transparent and error-free voter list, underscoring that such reviews are essential to uphold democratic processes. Officials expressed confidence that with focused efforts and accountability, the remaining gaps in the Mapping & Progeny work would be addressed swiftly in the Bhadravati Assembly constituency.

District administration has imposed prohibitory orders within 200 metres of examination centres in Vijayapura district

Prohibitory Orders Imposed Around Examination Centres

VIJAYAPURA

In view of the smooth and fair conduct of examinations, the Vijayapura district administration has imposed prohibitory orders around examination centres across the district. The order has been issued by the District Magistrate and Deputy Commissioner Dr. Anand K., invoking provisions of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita–2023.

According to the official order, examinations will be held at eight designated examination centres in the district from January 19 to January 24. To maintain law and order and prevent any untoward incidents during this period, prohibitory orders have been enforced within a radius of 200 metres around all examination centres.

Under the restrictions, the specified area will be treated as a prohibited zone from 9 am until the completion of examinations on each day. During this time, assembly of people, unnecessary movement, and activities that may disturb the examination process are strictly banned. The administration has clarified that the restrictions are purely precautionary and intended to ensure a calm and disciplined environment for examinees.

The order also prohibits officials, staff, candidates, and others involved in examination-related work from carrying or using mobile phones inside the examination centres. The use of electronic gadgets that could aid unfair practices has been strictly barred to uphold the integrity of the examinations.

In addition, the district administration has directed that internet cafés, cyber cafés, computer centres, and coaching centres located within 200 metres of the examination centres must remain closed during examination hours. This measure has been taken to prevent any misuse of digital facilities that could compromise the examination process. Officials stated that police personnel will be deployed around the examination centres to enforce the prohibitory orders effectively. Any violation of the restrictions will attract strict legal action as per the relevant provisions of law.

Sankranti Festival Brings Sweet Beginnings, Says Ex-MLA H.P. Manjunath

HUNSUR

Former MLA H.P. Manjunath said that the Sankranti festival is a special occasion for everyone, marking the day when the Sun changes its path from the southern direction to the northern, bringing new light and auspicious beginnings into people's lives.

Speaking after being felicitated at the special program "Sankranti Sammilana: Meeting of Office Bearers," organized by the Taluk Vishwarma Sangha at the Sriraghavendra Swamiji Math in Kalkunike, he explained that the festival symbolizes sweetness. "During Sankranti, everyone celebrates by cooking and eating sweet Pongal, symbolizing the coming together of Lord Suryadeva (Sun God) and Shani Deva. On this day, people mix jaggery and sesame seeds representing Suryadeva and Shani Deva and distribute them to everyone, making it a day of joy and community celebration," he said.

Public Objections Invited for Reorganisation of GPs

VIJAYAPURA

The Vijayapura district administration has issued a draft notification proposing the reorganisation of certain Gram Panchayats within the district and has invited objections from the public. The notification has been released in accordance with the provisions of the Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj Act, 1993, and a government directive dated January 7, 2026.

As per the draft notification, changes have been proposed in the jurisdiction of Gram Panchayats under Vijayapura taluk. Accordingly, Ainapur and Buranapur villages are proposed to be included under the Ainapur Gram Panchayat limits, while Jumanal and Khutnapur villages are proposed to be brought under the Jumanal Gram Panchayat limits. The reorganisation aims to streamline administrative functioning and improve the delivery of civic services at the grassroots level.

The draft notification has been issued by the District Election Officer and Deputy Commissioner Dr. Anand K., exercising powers vested under Section 4, Sub-section 2 of the Act. Officials stated that such restructuring is carried out periodically to reflect population changes, administrative convenience, and developmental requirements of rural areas.

Members of the public, local residents, and stakeholders who have objections or suggestions regarding the proposed reorganisation have been given an opportunity to submit their representations. The district administration has specified that objections must be submitted in writing to the office of the Deputy Commissioner between January 17, 2026 and January 23, 2026.

Authorities clarified that objections received within the stipulated period will be examined carefully before taking a final decision. After reviewing public feedback, the administration will issue a final notification regarding the reorganisation of the concerned Gram Panchayats.

Officials have urged residents of the affected villages to actively participate in the process and voice their concerns, if any. "Public participation is essential in matters of local governance. Suggestions and objections will help the administration take an informed and balanced decision," officials said.

₹5 Lakh Compensation Handed Over to Family of Bus Accident Victim

BIDAR

Bidar district witnessed an emotional moment as Karnataka government minister Rahim Khan handed over a compensation cheque of ₹5 lakh to the family of a pilgrim who lost his life in a tragic bus accident in Saudi Arabia last year. The compensation was provided to the family of late Rahamat Bi, a resident of Mailoor in Bidar district, who died during the pilgrimage journey.

The cheque was formally handed over in Bidar in the presence of officials and representatives of the Karnataka State Haj Committee. Committee president S. Jullikar Ahmed Khan and senior district officials were present during the handover.

Recalling the tragic incident, officials stated that on November 17, 2025, a bus carrying Indian pilgrims met with a fatal accident between Mecca and Medina after colliding with a diesel tanker. The accident resulted in the death of 45 Indian pilgrims, including Rahamat Bi, who was aged around 80 years. The incident sent shockwaves across the country and left several families in deep grief.

Following the tragedy, the Karnataka government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, had announced a compensation of ₹5 lakh for the families of the deceased pilgrims from the state. The cheque handover programme marked the formal implementation of that assurance.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Rahim Khan said that no amount of financial assistance can truly compensate for the loss of a loved one, especially during a sacred pilgrimage. However, the government stands firmly with the bereaved families in their time of distress. "We share the pain of the family and will continue to support them in every possible way," he said.

He further assured that the state government remains committed to extending administrative and moral support to families affected by such tragedies. The minister also appreciated the role played by the Karnataka State Haj Committee in coordinating with Indian consular officials in Saudi Arabia and facilitating necessary formalities.

Haj Committee president S. Jullikar Ahmed Khan said the committee worked in close coordination with Indian authorities to ensure smooth handling of procedures related to the accident. He added that the committee would continue to guide and support the families of affected pilgrims.

SPIRITUAL ENRICHING

Anger Is Humanity's Greatest Enemy: Dr. Anand Yogeshwara Swamiji

BIDAR

Bidar witnessed a spiritually enriching discourse during a religious and cultural programme organised at the historic Shadgeri Hiremath, where renowned spiritual leader Dr. Anand Yogeshwara Swamiji delivered a thought-provoking message on human values. Speaking to devotees and dignitaries, the Swamiji observed that anger is the greatest enemy of humanity and warned that it clouds wisdom, weakens character, and disturbs inner peace.

Addressing the gathering, he said that when knowledge diminishes and patience weakens, anger takes over the human mind, leading to destructive consequences. "A wise and thoughtful person never allows anger to dominate. Anger brings neither happiness here nor peace elsewhere," he remarked. He urged people to cultivate self-control, clarity of vision, and compassion to lead a meaningful life.

The discourse was delivered during a special programme organised in honour of Gangadhara Shree, which drew devotees, scholars, and community leaders from various parts of the district. The Swamiji emphasised that human beings must learn to conquer anger, ego, and impatience, stating that victory over these negative traits is equivalent to conquering the world itself.

He further said that a person should learn to see what is beneficial and positive, rather than focusing on faults. "If one keeps searching only for mistakes, life itself becomes a burden. True happiness lies in right perception and disciplined thinking," he added. His address resonated strongly with the audience, many of whom described it as deeply inspiring.

The programme was presided over by senior religious and social leaders, including representatives of cultural organisations and local institutions. Several dignitaries, scholars, and devotees were present on the dais, reflecting the importance of the event in the region's spiritual calendar.

The event also featured ceremonial honours and traditional rituals, adding to the devotional atmosphere of the programme. Organisers stated that such discourses play a crucial role in guiding society towards ethical living and emotional balance, especially in today's fast-paced and stressful life.

QUICK READ

Bheemanna Khandre Remembered as Social-Minded Leader

Tumakuru

Dr. S. Paramesh, president of the district unit of the All India Veerashaiva-Lingayat Mahasabha, described former minister Bheemanna Khandre as an unforgettable personality with deep social commitment. He was speaking at a tribute meeting organised by the Mahasabha in the city to honour the contributions of the late leader. Addressing the gathering, Dr. Paramesh said Bheemanna Khandre's life was dedicated to public service, social justice, and the upliftment of the marginalised. Khandre was not only a seasoned politician but also a freedom fighter and a visionary leader who worked selflessly for society. His values and service-oriented approach will continue to inspire generations, he said.

Cinema for the Community Statewide Film Festival Launched

Tumakuru

Tumakuru city marked the beginning of a unique cultural initiative with the launch of the 'Cinema for the Community – Statewide Film Festival', organised by Janamitra Movies, at the Kannada Bhavan. The festival aims to take meaningful cinema to the people and encourage collective viewing experiences across Karnataka. As part of the inaugural programme, the acclaimed film Thai Kastur Gandhi, directed by noted literary figure and filmmaker Prof. Baraguru Ramachandrappa, was screened. The screening witnessed enthusiastic participation from people of all age groups, including children and women, reflecting the inclusive spirit of the festival. Addressing the gathering, Prof. Baraguru Ramachandrappa emphasised the importance of developing a strong conceptual framework.

Students, Parents Protest in Shira against Closure of Govt School

Protest staged in Shira taluk demanding withdrawal of the decision to close their village school

JODIDEVARAHALLI

Students and parents under the leadership of AIDSSO staged a protest at Jodidevarahalli village in Shira taluk, demanding that the government withdraw its decision to close their local government school. The protest highlighted growing public anger over the policy of merging village schools under the Karnataka Public Schools (KPS) system.

The demonstrators strongly opposed the move to shut down the government school in Jodidevarahalli and merge it with the Brahmasandra School, citing inconvenience and injustice to rural students. Protesters said the policy of closing schools within a five-kilometre radius in the name of Karnataka Public Schools is adversely affecting children from villages, especially those from economically weaker backgrounds.

Raising slogans and holding placards, students and parents urged the authorities to protect village-level education and ensure that children are not forced to travel long distances to attend school. They said the closure would disrupt children's daily routines and pose safety concerns, particularly for younger students.

Villager Srinivasa Murthy, speaking at the protest, said the decision to close and merge government schools in villages is unjust and unacceptable. The existing system, where children study in their own villages and return home safely, is being dismantled. Closing schools in the name of Karnataka Public Schools is condemnable, he said.

He further demanded that instead of shutting down village schools, the government should provide them with better infrastructure, qualified teachers, and quality education on par with KPS institutions. If facilities are improved, government schools can thrive without forcing students to travel elsewhere, he added.

Members of AIDSSO said the protest was part of a broader movement against the systematic closure of government schools across Karnataka. They warned that such policies would weaken public education and push rural students at a disadvantage compared to their urban counterparts.

Stagnant Sewage Water Creates Health Hazard

CHINTAMANI

Residents of the Scheduled Caste colony in Doddaganjur village, located in Kasaba Hobli of Chintamani taluk, are facing severe difficulties due to sewage water stagnating on internal roads and around houses. The accumulated sewage has been emitting a foul smell, creating an unhygienic environment and posing serious health risks to the local population. According to residents, sewage water has been standing on the road for several days, disrupting normal movement and causing problems for public transport and pedestrians. The situation has become especially challenging for school children, elderly people, and women, who find it difficult to move through the affected area.

Delay in Ambulance Service Allegedly Turns Fatal

TUMKUR

A heartbreaking incident has come to light from Y. N. Hoskote, in Tumakuru district, where a patient suffering from respiratory problems allegedly died due to the non-availability of an ambulance at a government health facility. The incident has triggered outrage among family members and raised serious questions about emergency healthcare preparedness in rural areas.

A 42-year-old man died in Pavagad taluk allegedly after failing to get an ambulance on time

The deceased has been identified as Syed Akram (42). According to family members, Akram was suffering from severe breathing difficulties and was rushed to the Community Health Centre at Y.N. Hoskote by his brother Nayaz on January 16. After examining the patient, the attending doctor reportedly found that Akram's blood pressure was dangerously low and advised that he be immediately shifted to the taluk hospital for advanced treatment.

However, despite the medical advice, the patient could not be transferred due to the unavailability of an ambulance. Nayaz alleged that they waited for nearly an hour at the health centre, but no ambulance arrived. He further claimed that the hospital neither had an ambulance stationed on the premises nor a driver available to operate one at that crucial time.

As we waited helplessly, my brother's condition kept worsening. If an ambulance had been available, his life could have been saved, Nayaz alleged, holding the hospital administration responsible for the tragic death. He stated that the lack of basic emergency facilities amounted to gross negligence.

Syed Akram reportedly died before arrangements for alternative transport could be made. The incident came to public attention later, sparking anger and grief among local residents and the victim's relatives. Family members expressed anguish over the chaos and lack of coordination at the hospital and vowed to raise the issue so that no other family has to endure similar suffering.

The incident has once again highlighted gaps in rural healthcare infrastructure, particularly the absence of functional ambulances and trained personnel at community health centres. Local residents have demanded immediate corrective measures, including the permanent deployment of ambulances and drivers at such facilities.

Health department officials are yet to issue a detailed response. Meanwhile, the tragedy has intensified calls for accountability and urgent reforms to ensure timely emergency care in villages across the district.

Backward Classes Welfare Department organised a three-month competitive exam and career guidance workshop for students in Bagepalli

Three-Month Competitive Exam and Career Guidance Workshop Held

BAGEPALLI

A three-month competitive examination training and career guidance workshop was organised for pre-matric and post-matric students at the hostel in Bagepalli. The programme was conducted by the Backward Classes Welfare Department with the aim of preparing students from rural backgrounds for competitive examinations and future career opportunities.

The workshop is designed to provide structured coaching, academic support, and career-oriented guidance to students staying in government hostels. Speaking on the occasion, R. Shivappa, Taluk Extension Officer, Welfare Department of Backward Classes, said that students from rural areas should make the best use of the facilities provided by the government, including free food and accommodation, and focus on achieving high academic results.

He informed that the selected students would receive three months of intensive training aimed at enhancing their knowledge, confidence, and exam-taking skills. This programme is intended to help students compete on par with others and succeed in competitive examinations, he said.

Shivappa further stated that subject experts and experienced trainers would guide students on a wide range of competitive examinations and career paths. Guidance will be provided for prestigious services and professions such as KAS, IAS, IPS, primary and high school teacher recruitment, TET, banking examinations, and other government job opportunities. Students will also be trained in general knowledge, reasoning, aptitude, and personality development.

Officials said the initiative is part of the department's broader effort to empower students from backward classes by equipping them with the necessary academic and career skills. Special emphasis will be placed on motivating students, identifying their strengths, and helping them choose suitable career paths.

Students attending the programme expressed happiness over the opportunity, stating that such free training and expert guidance would greatly help them in shaping their future. Hostel authorities and staff assured full support for the smooth conduct of the workshop.

2 Youth Arrested for Dangerous Bike Stunts on NH-648

DODDABALLAPURA

Doddaballapura rural police have arrested two youths for performing dangerous bike stunts on the Devanahalli–Doddaballapura National Highway (NH-648) and seized their motorcycles. The action was taken after a video of the incident went viral on social media.

The arrested youths have been identified as Wasim Pasha (19) and Shukur Mia (20), both residents of Doddaballapura city. According to the police, the duo was riding on NH-648 near Nagadenahalli village in the taluk and was performing high-speed wheelies after removing the number plates from their motorcycles.

Police officials said the accused created panic among commuters by abruptly lifting the front wheels of their bikes and obstructing the smooth flow of traffic on the busy national highway. Their reckless behaviour posed a serious threat to the safety of motorists, including two-wheeler riders, car drivers, and pedestrians using the stretch.

The incident came to the notice of the police after videos recorded by other bikers travelling behind them circulated widely on social media platforms. Based on the video evidence and CCTV footage from the highway and nearby areas, rural police identified and traced the accused.

Police said stunt riding on highways is illegal; cases were registered and the motorcycles seized by authorities.

People's Forum Demands Ban on Pea Sales

KOLAR

The Kolar District People's Forum has demanded an immediate ban on the sale of peas on MG Road in Srinivaspura town, citing persistent traffic congestion and violations of market regulations. In this regard, office-bearers of the forum submitted a memorandum to S. M. Mangala, Additional District Commissioner.Forum representatives said that despite repeated complaints over the past several years, no effective action has been taken to regulate the seasonal roadside business that springs up annually on the busy old market road. They warned that if the district and taluk administrations fail to act promptly, the forum would stage a protest in front of the District Collector's office.

According to the forum, for the last four to five years, farmers' organisations, local groups, and residents of Srinivaspura taluk have repeatedly approached the Tahsildar, municipal officials, and police authorities seeking intervention. However, every year for nearly 50 days during the season, pea vendors reportedly occupy both sides of MG Road, operating without basic facilities such as water, shade, or authorised stalls.

This unregulated activity violates the provisions of the APMC Act and causes severe inconvenience to commuters, a forum representative said. The roadside sale of peas, they added, leads to frequent traffic jams, restricts the movement of emergency vehicles, and creates safety risks for pedestrians.

The forum also pointed out that vendors conduct business on public roads rather than in designated market spaces, causing chaos in one of the town's busiest stretches. Residents and shopkeepers have complained that access to homes and businesses is blocked, while sanitation and waste management issues worsen during the season. Urging the administration to enforce the law strictly, the forum demanded that pea trading be shifted to authorised market yards with proper infrastructure.

SSLC EXAM GUIDANCE

SSLC Exam Crucial for Future: Retired Soldier

BAGEPALLI

Emphasising the importance of disciplined preparation for the SSLC examination, retired soldier Subramaniam Venkatesh has urged students to utilise their time effectively and focus on consistent study. He was speaking at an awareness programme held after distributing examination materials at the Government High School in Ghantamvaripalli village of Bagepalli taluk.

Addressing students, Venkatesh said the SSLC examination plays a vital role in shaping one's future. SSLC marks are important and can influence future opportunities, including employment. Students should not waste time and must thoroughly read their textbooks, he advised. Stressing the value of practice, he encouraged students to continuously revise lessons and practise answering all possible questions to gain confidence during examinations. Sharing his experiences as a former soldier, Venkatesh said discipline, dedication, and perseverance are key to success in any field. He motivated students to remain focused on their goals and face examinations with confidence rather than fear. Hard work never goes unrewarded. With the right effort, success is guaranteed, he told the students.

Speaking on the occasion, G. Ramasubbamma, headmistress of a government high school, highlighted the sacrifices made by soldiers for the nation. She said only a few people get the opportunity to serve the country directly and urged students to draw inspiration from such service. We should remember and respect the soldiers who guard our borders day and night, braving cold, wind, and extreme conditions, she said. Ramasubbamma also encouraged students to inculcate values such as discipline, patriotism, and social responsibility alongside academic excellence. She pointed out that education not only shapes careers but also builds responsible citizens.

Students and teachers present at the programme said the interaction was motivating and informative. Many students expressed that the guidance provided by a retired soldier boosted their confidence ahead of the SSLC examinations.

The programme concluded with a call to students to remain committed to their studies and approach the upcoming examinations with determination and self-belief. Organisers stated that such initiatives aim to motivate rural students and equip them with both academic guidance and life values, ensuring holistic development.

KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT STOCK (SECURITIES)
Finance Department, Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru

NOTICE

1. Aggregate Amount : Total Rs.6000 crore (Rs.2,000 crore - Re-issue of 7.25% SGS 2032; Rs.2,000 crore - 7-Year 6-Month Tenure; Rs.2,000 crore - 11-Year 6-Month Tenure)
2. Method of Issue : By auction, through RBI (PDO), Mumbai
3. Date of auction : January 20, 2026

Government of Karnataka invites subscription to the above securities. Copies of the Notification and Application forms may be obtained from PDO, RBI, Bangalore. Non-competitive bidding facility has been introduced by RBI to encourage participation of retail investors. The Government stock up to 10% of the notified amount of the sale will be allotted to eligible individuals and institutions. Sample Tender Forms and the revised scheme of Non-competitive bidding facility is available on the website **www.rbi.org.in.**

Sd/- (Ikram Shariff)
Joint Secretary to Government
(Budget & Resources), Finance Department

DIPR/CP/5050/Zen/2025-26

CHANGE OF NAME

I, ROSHAN DHAHABI S/o MANSURR DHAHABI, R/o No 1988/2, Near Vidhyanikethan School, 9th Block, Vishveshwaraiah layout, Viswavidalaya, BangaloreSouth, Bengaluru, Karnataka-560056, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as ROSHAN ESHAN.

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact:
080-41209042

IN THE COURT OF THE PRINCIPAL CIVIL JUDGE AND JMFC AT HOSAKOTE, C.Misc. No 511/2025

BETWEEN: 1) Hanumantharayappa S/o Late Chikka Muniyappa, aged above 70 years, R/at Amblipura Village, Jadigena halli Hobli, Hosakote Taluk. Bangalore Rural District. 2) Gangappa S/o Late Chikka Muniyappa, Aged about 65 years. R/at Malleshpalya, New Thippasandra, Bangalore. 3) Yarrappa S/o Late Chikka Muniyappa, Aged about 63 years, R/at Kamandahalli village. Vemgal Hobli, Kolar Taluk, 4) Rathnamma D/o Late Chikka Muniyappa, Aged about 56 years. R/at Hosakote Town, Bangalore Rural District. 5) Shanthamma D/o Late Chikka Muniyappa, Aged about 56 years, R/at Narasapura Village, And Hobli, Kolar Talukand district. 6) Nagamma D/o Late Chikka Muniyappa, Aged about 54 years, R/at Narasapura Village and hobli, Kolar Taluk and District. ....Petitioners

AND

1)The birth and death Register, Tahsildar, Hosakore. 2) Narayanappa S/o late Chikka Muniyappa, Aged about 75 years, R/at Cheemasandra Villege, Nandagudi Hobli, Hosakote Taluk, Bangalore Rural District. ..Respondents

GENERAL PUBLIC NOTICE

Whereas the petitioners have filed the above petition seeking the direction to the Thasildar, Hosakote for issuance of death certificate of petitoner No 1 to 6 and also Respondent no 2 Father namely Late Chilika Muniyappa S/o Late patlappa who died on 22-08-1988 at above sand address. The case is posted for the appearance for interested parties publics on 11/2/2026 at 11 A.M. Hence interested parties are hereby required to appear either in person or through pleader properly instructed in this behalf on 11/2/2026 at 11 A.M before the Hon'ble Principal Civil Judge and JMFC at Hosakote, Bangalore Rural Dist. Failing which the above case will be disposed in your absence you may be placed exparty. Given under my hand and seal of the court this day of 8-1-2026.

By order of the court, Sd/- Sheristedar, Civil Judge & J.M.F.C, Hoskote.
Anitha.G, Advocate, Hosakote.

QUICK READ

T'gana cancels Naini tender, orders fresh bids

Hyderabad

Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka on Sunday directed Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) to cancel the mining tender for the Naini coal block. This follows allegations against him regarding the tender process. He said SCCL should issue fresh tenders following Centre guidelines. Rejecting the claims, he stated he was not afraid of fabricated stories. Vikramarka emphasized that his goal in politics is to safeguard the state's assets for future generations, not to amass personal wealth or business interests.

CBI arrests Tripura chit fund case kingpin

New Delhi

The CBI on Sunday arrested Tapan Pramanik, the main accused in a Rs 4 crore Tripura chit fund fraud, from Nadia district, West Bengal. Pramanik, a proclaimed offender since 2012, was produced before a Nadia court for transit remand to Tripura. His arrest came after field checks, surveillance, and call data analysis. The case, registered in 2013, names Pramanik, Director of M.P.S. Agro-Animal Projects Ltd, and others, following notifications from Tripura and the central government.

ED seizes cash, vehicles in Odisha mining raids

Bhubaneswar

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) seized Rs 2.63 crore in cash and several vehicles during raids at over 25 locations in Ganjam district, Odisha, on January 16. The action targeted a syndicate involved in illegal sand and black stone mining, along with contractors linked to country liquor operations. Conducted under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, the raids involved 175 officials from six states. The accused allegedly used force and intimidation to carry out illegal mining, terrorizing local residents.

BENGAL POLLS

Modi promises 'One District, One Product' if voted to power

He also promised law-and-order reforms, women's safety, and a corruption-free environment under BJP rule.

KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday announced that if the BJP comes to power in West Bengal, the party will introduce the 'One District, One Product' (ODOP) policy to promote district-specific products and benefit local people.

Addressing a public rally at Singur in Hooghly district of West Bengal, he said every district has unique talents and specialties, and the BJP will ensure tailored plans to maximise the benefits for residents.

PM Modi also accused the Mamata Banerjee-led West Bengal government of denying citizens access to central schemes to "settle scores" with him and the BJP. He highlighted the delay in implementing the national digital platform for fishermen, called 'Matsyajibi Yojana', saying the state government is obstructing registrations and harming the future of local fishermen.

The Prime Minister further criticised the West Bengal government for hindering land procurement for border fencing with Bangladesh, allegedly allowing infiltrators to enter freely and strengthen the Trinamool Congress' voter base. He pointed out that the current law-and-order situation, marked by a "mafia-raj" and syndicate taxes, discourages new investments in the state. Modi assured that a BJP government would end these practices.

Focusing on safety, PM Modi promised a corruption-free and violence-free environment, prioritising women's security. He cited incidents in Sandeshkhali and educational institutions, vowing that such atrocities would no longer occur under BJP governance. Concluding his speech, Modi urged voters to ensure a stable, development-oriented government that safeguards people, promotes local industries, and brings law-and-order reforms to West Bengal.

Jaishankar holds talks with US senator Daines

NEW DELHI

Discusses trade, technology, and bilateral cooperation amid ongoing India-US talks on critical issues.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met US Senator Steve Daines on Sunday in Delhi to discuss bilateral ties and strategic cooperation. The meeting focused on trade, technology, and regional developments, strengthening India-US relations.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Sunday held discussions with US Senator Steve Daines, who is visiting India. Jaishankar described the meeting as a "wide-ranging and open discussion" on the bilateral relationship and its strategic importance. The conversation included trade, technology, innovation, and regional issues.

Prior to this, Indian Ambassador to the US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu, had also met Senator Daines to review aspects of India-US cooperation. Jaishankar expressed appreciation for Daines' insights and strong support for the bilateral partnership.

The visit coincides with the arrival of Sergio Gor as the new US Ambassador to India. It also comes ahead of planned talks between Jaishankar and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio next month, as discussions on trade agreements have resumed.

Earlier, Jaishankar spoke with Secretary Rubio on January 13, covering trade, defence, civil nuclear cooperation, critical minerals, and energy. Both leaders agreed to stay in touch on these issues. The talks come amid tensions over US tariffs on Indian imports, including Russian oil, which have been in place since February last year following Prime Minister Modi's US visit.

The meeting with Senator Daines reinforces India's ongoing engagement with the US on multiple fronts, including trade, energy, defence, and regional security, reflecting both nations' commitment to strengthen their strategic partnership in a rapidly changing global environment.

WEF Summit: Guj DyCM to lead state delegation

GANDHINAGAR

As India prepares for a strong presence at the World Economic Forum (WEF), Gujarat's Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi will lead the state-level delegation at the five-day annual summit in Davos, Switzerland, from January 19 to 23. The WEF Annual Meeting is widely regarded as a gathering of global leaders, senior diplomats, industry experts, and social entrepreneurs to discuss pressing global issues, including climate change, and seek practical solutions.

Gujarat's participation reflects its future-ready approach towards global collaboration and economic transformation. During the summit, Deputy CM Sanghavi is scheduled to hold over 50 high-level meetings with leaders and investors across key sectors such as Advanced Manufacturing, Textiles, Semiconductors, Emerging Technologies, Pharmaceuticals, Renewable Energy, Food Processing, Chemicals, Shipping, Logistics, Electronics, and Aerospace.

Planned interactions include discussions with global companies like AP Moller Maersk, Engie, EDF, Johnson Controls, Sumitomo Group, Linde, SEALSQ, and Tillman Global. Through these engagements, Sanghavi aims to strengthen Gujarat's industrial ecosystem, foster technology and innovation partnerships, attract global investments, and build long-term international institutional linkages.

Poland FM urges Ukraine to stay strong

JAIPUR

Poland's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski, currently visiting India, on Sunday called on the people of Ukraine to "remain strong" and continue protecting their culture and freedom. Speaking at a session titled "A Continent in Crisis: Russia, Ukraine and Europe" at the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF), Sikorski highlighted the severe humanitarian and economic impact of the ongoing war on Ukraine.

Addressing the audience, Sikorski noted that thousands of Ukrainians have been killed, cities destroyed, and civilians forced to endure harsh winter conditions without basic amenities. He criticized Russian President Vladimir Putin's initial expectation of a short "special operation," which has turned into a prolonged conflict causing significant military and economic losses for Russia.

Sikorski also warned against growing Russia-China ties, saying economic dependence on China could weaken Russia over time. He stressed that European nations, including Poland, must strengthen defense capabilities and continue supporting Ukraine with military assistance, including fighter jets and other equipment.

Speaking on US-Europe relations, he emphasized the importance of Europe becoming more self-reliant in defense. He also praised Poland's humanitarian response, hosting millions of Ukrainian refugees despite economic and social pressures.

The session touched upon NATO, European security, hybrid warfare, drone and cyber-attacks, the European Union's defense policies, and China's global influence. Sikorski was joined by author Anne Applebaum and engaged in a conversation with former Indian diplomat Navtej Sarna. The JLF session drew a large audience of literature enthusiasts, intellectuals, and diplomats from India and abroad, reflecting keen interest in global politics and the ongoing crisis in Europe.

Prez Murmu shares glimpse of NE-inspired R-Day invite

NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu unveiled a unique invitation celebrating North Eastern culture for Republic Day celebrations.

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday offered a glimpse of a specially crafted invitation for the 'At Home' event on the 77th Republic Day, highlighting the rich artistic traditions of India's North Eastern states. Sharing a short film on her social media, she said the invite kit honors "the skilled artisans and craftspeople of the Ashtalakshmi states" and showcases living regional traditions.

The invitation kit features a woven bamboo mat from Tripura forming a wall-hanging style panel that displays art from all eight North Eastern states. Its decorative motifs draw inspiration from Assamese manuscript painting and reflect the region's flora and fauna. The kit also includes unique crafts such as woven nettle fabric and embroidery from Sikkim, green bamboo weaving from Meghalaya, Mon Shugu paper from Arunachal Pradesh, Gogona bamboo jaw harp from Assam, bamboo jewellery from Tripura, orange wild rhea and stinging nettle fabric from Nagaland, handwoven Puan Chei from Mizoram, Longpi Black Pottery from Manipur, and an Eri silk stole.

The 'At Home' event at Rashtrapati Bhavan on January 26 will host dignitaries and cultural icons. Chief Guests Antonio Costa and Ursula von der Leyen will attend. The Republic Day Parade will mark 150 years of 'Vande Mataram', showcase military strength, and display 30 colorful tableaux celebrating India's heritage.

TN polls: PM Modi to launch NDA campaign on January 23

CHENNAI

With the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections approaching, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) will formally kick off its campaign with a rally addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Madurantakam on January 23.

The announcement was made by Nainar Nagenthran, BJP state president and legislative party leader, signalling the alliance's intent to challenge the ruling DMK aggressively.

Speaking to reporters, Nagenthran said the Prime Minister will address a large public gathering in the afternoon, marking the start of NDA's electoral battle in the State.

"All leaders will find a place on the stage during the Prime Minister's visit," he added, hinting at a display of alliance unity, though he did not confirm specific partners, including TTV Dhinakaran's AMMK, former CM O Panneerselvam, or the DMDK.

On claims of "copied" election promises between DMK and AIADMK, Nagenthran defended the AIADMK, noting that previous proposals, like Rs 1,500 monthly assistance for women, have been enhanced to Rs 2,000. He said, "It cannot be called a copy simply because a similar scheme exists," adding that the rally will influence public sentiment.

Responding to reports that the Defence Ministry rejected the proposed Hosur International Airport project, he clarified that permission has not been denied and only certain clarifications were requested.

The January 23 rally is expected to be a key moment for the NDA as it seeks to present itself as the main alternative to the Dravidian parties ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections.

IndiGo flight makes emergency landing after bomb scare

NEW DELHI

An IndiGo Airlines flight from Delhi to Bagdogra was forced to make an emergency landing at Lucknow Airport on Sunday following a bomb threat reported mid-air.

Flight 6E-6650, carrying 230 passengers and eight infants along with two pilots and five crew members, was diverted as a precautionary measure.

IndiGo spokesperson said, "A security threat was noticed onboard, and relevant authorities were immediately informed. Safety and security of our customers, crew, and aircraft remain our top priorities." Passengers were provided refreshments and regular updates while authorities conducted security checks.

According to Lucknow ACP Rajneesh Verma, the threat came to light after a handwritten note was found on a tissue paper in the aircraft's toilet. Following standard protocol, the flight landed safely at around 9:17 am and was moved to an isolation bay for thorough inspection. All passengers were evacuated and scanned to ensure safety.

Security teams, including the Bomb Disposal Squad and CISF personnel, carried out detailed searches of the aircraft and surrounding areas. Air Traffic Control received the bomb threat alert at approximately 8:46 am, prompting immediate activation of safety procedures.

Officials confirmed that all passengers and crew are safe, and a comprehensive investigation is underway to determine any potential risks. The airline has assured that it is cooperating fully with authorities and making efforts to minimise inconvenience to its customers while the investigation continues.

PUSH FOR BLUE ECONOMY

India launches first open-sea fish farming project

NEW DELHI

Union Minister of State for Earth Sciences, Dr Jitendra Singh, on Sunday launched India's first open-sea marine fish farming project in the Andaman Sea, marking a key step toward strengthening the nation's Blue Economy.

The project, inaugurated at North Bay, Sri Vijaya Puram, is a collaborative initiative among the Ministry of Earth Sciences, the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration. It focuses on cultivating marine finfish and seaweed in natural ocean conditions while integrating scientific innovation with livelihood opportunities for local communities.

Dr Singh highlighted that India's oceans, like its Himalayan and mainland resources, have immense untapped economic potential. During the visit, he handed over seaweed seeds to local fishing communities for deep-water cultivation and provided finfish seeds for cage-based open-sea farming using NIOT-designed cages. He said that lessons from the pilot project could allow future scaling through public–private partnerships, boosting employment and accelerating India's Blue Economy growth.

Emphasising India's maritime wealth, Dr Singh noted that for nearly 70 years after Independence, ocean resources remained underexplored. Since 2014, the government has shifted focus to recognise the economic and developmental potential of the country's western, southern, and eastern seaboards.

Later, the minister visited the Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park near Wandoor, a protected marine ecosystem spread across 15 islands, including Jolly Buoy and Red Skin. He observed vibrant coral reefs, mangroves, turtles, and diverse fish species, underlining the ecological and economic significance of India's marine biodiversity.

QUICK READ

Assam power min lauds 'Amrit Bharat' launch

Dibrugarh

The Amrit Bharat Express began its first journey from Dibrugarh to Gomti Nagar on Sunday, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Assam Power Minister Prasanta Phukan welcomed the launch, calling it a milestone for rail connectivity in the Northeast. He expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister for improving transport links. The new train service is expected to strengthen Assam's connections to major cities, making travel easier and more accessible for passengers across the region.

Kashmiri Pandits face painful exodus after

New Delhi

Thirty-five years after the mass exodus of Kashmiri Pandits, their struggle remains unresolved. Nearly seven lakh people were forced to leave Kashmir due to their Hindu identity. Despite the passage of time, the pain persists, and return to their homeland has remained impossible. Experts say the displacement resulted from a long, calculated process beginning after Jammu and Kashmir's accession in 1947, escalating in the late 1980s. Silence and systemic neglect have kept their plight largely unacknowledged.

Gunfight erupts between forces, terrorists in Kishtwar

Jammu

A gunfight broke out on Sunday in Singhpora, Kishtwar, between security forces and terrorists. Officials said forces launched a Cordon and Search Operation after receiving intelligence about terrorist presence. The hiding terrorists opened fire, leading to an encounter. Reinforcements were sent, and the area was cordoned to prevent escape. Hilly districts of Jammu, including Kathua, Poonch, Rajouri, Doda, Udhampur, and Reasi, remain under close watch after reports of Pakistani terrorists moving through forested mountain regions.

Assam's rail budget soars 5x under BJP: Modi

'Enhanced rail connectivity is integrating the Northeast with the national economy and ending its historical sense of isolation'.

GUWAHATI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday criticised previous Congress governments for allocating low funds to Assam's railways. He said Congress provided around Rs 2,000 crore annually, while under BJP, the allocation increased to nearly Rs 10,000 crore, five times more.

Modi said this investment enabled major infrastructure growth, including new rail lines, doubling, electrification, and improved passenger facilities. He launched three new trains from Kaliabor: the Vande Bharat Sleeper connecting Guwahati to Kolkata, and two Amrit Bharat Express trains linking Assam to West Bengal, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh, benefiting lakhs of passengers.

The Prime Minister said these trains will improve trade, education access, and travel, bringing the Northeast closer to national development. He noted that the region had long suffered from distance—both geographically and emotionally—feeling left behind in progress. Modi stated that BJP governments at the Centre and State are changing this by focusing on connectivity and development across roadways, railways, airways, and waterways.

Earlier, he performed the 'bhoomi pujan' for the Rs 6,950 crore Kaziranga Elevated Corridor Project, upgrading the Kaliabor–Numaligarh section of NH-715 to four lanes. The Prime Minister underlined that such initiatives aim to integrate the Northeast fully into India's growth story, boosting infrastructure, economy, and trust in the region while improving daily life for citizens.

'GAINS UNDER BJP'

- Rail budget up 5x to Rs ₹10,000 cr
- 3 new trains launched from Kaliabor
- Vande Bharat Sleeper for Guwahati-Kolkata
- Amrit Bharat Express connects 4 states
- Focus on ending Northeast's "distance"

PM's Singur rally: Guv arrives, security tightened

NEW DELHI : West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose arrived at Bandel railway station on Sunday from Malda ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled public rally in Singur, Hooghly district.

The Governor's visit is part of preparations for the Prime Minister's official engagements in the state, with strict security measures implemented at the station and additional personnel deployed to ensure safety.

Upon arrival, Governor Bose proceeded to the District Magistrate's Circuit House and told media, "I came for the functions of the Prime Minister." Later, Prime Minister Modi will attend an organisational programme and virtually inaugurate multiple central government projects in West Bengal, mostly related to Indian Railways, highlighting the Centre's focus on railway infrastructure.

Official sources said Modi will lay the foundation stone and inaugurate projects worth around Rs 830 crore before addressing the public rally at the site of the abandoned Tata Nano plant in Singur. The choice of Singur carries strong political significance, as the area was the centre of the 2008 agitation against Tata Motors' Nano project. The then Trinamool Congress, led by Mamata Banerjee, opposed the land acquisition, prompting Tata to shift the project to Sanand in Gujarat, with Narendra Modi as Gujarat's Chief Minister facilitating the move.

The Prime Minister's rally is expected to revisit the 2008 developments while highlighting industrial growth, infrastructure, and development initiatives. Security has been heightened across Hooghly to ensure smooth conduct of the events. The visit underscores the government's continued focus on strengthening connectivity, supporting projects, and engaging with local communities in politically significant areas.

India-US ties expand across trade, tech, edu

NEW DELHI

US Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor, concluded a productive visit to Mumbai on Sunday, highlighting growing cooperation between India and the United States across trade, technology, education, energy, and resilient supply chains. He described the trip as "very successful" and shared updates on meetings with key political, business, and religious leaders in the city.

During his Mumbai visit, Ambassador Gor met Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to discuss strategic priorities for strengthening collaboration in trade, technology, entertainment, and manufacturing. CM Fadnavis highlighted flagship initiatives, including the Navi Mumbai International Education City, and both leaders agreed to deepen the US-Maharashtra partnership.

Gor also held discussions with RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra, focusing on enhanced cooperation, particularly in advanced technology. In addition, he met business leaders, including Mukesh Ambani of Reliance Industries and N. Chandrasekaran, Chairperson of the Tata Companies, praising the latter's 150-year legacy and substantial presence in the US. Gor

emphasized the momentum being built across multiple sectors, noting that these efforts strengthen bilateral ties and support long-term development goals for both nations.

Earlier on Saturday, the Ambassador visited the Gateway of India, encouraging people to explore Mumbai's vibrant culture and iconic landmarks. Posting a picture on X, he described the city as "a vibrant tapestry of bustling streets, iconic landmarks, and the sparkling Arabian Sea," urging everyone to experience its charm.

Ambassador Gor's visit reflects the deepening India-US relationship, with a focus on innovation, investment, education, and energy collaboration. These engagements aim to foster stronger economic ties, improve technological exchange, and support resilient supply chains, further solidifying strategic partnerships while promoting mutual growth and understanding between the two nations.

MSDE holds Jan Shikshan Sansthan zonal meet

NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) will hold a two-day Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) Zonal Conference and Stakeholder Consultation on January 19–20 at Symbiosis Skill and Professional University, Pune. The event will review progress, share best practices, and strengthen community-based skilling initiatives. Representatives from 152 JSSs across 11 States and Union Territories, along with MSDE and partner institutions, will participate. Implemented through NGOs, the JSS scheme provides non-formal vocational training to marginalised groups, with a strong focus on women. The conference will assess FY 2025–26 performance, discuss policy refinements, explore emerging skills like AI, and include capacity-building sessions, exhibitions, and an exposure visit.

Mauni Amavasya: Over 3 cr devotees take holy dip at Sangam

PRAYAGRAJ

Prayagraj Divisional Commissioner Soumya Agarwal on Sunday said over three crore devotees took a holy dip at the Sangam during the Magh Mela on Mauni Amavasya. She added that while crowds continue to gather at the ghats, the situation in the city remains normal.

Flower petals were showered from a helicopter on the devotees during the ritual bath, creating a vibrant spectacle. Prayagraj District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma said the Mauni Amavasya bath began at midnight, and despite heavy fog, devotees kept arriving in large numbers. By 12 PM, more than three crore people had taken the holy dip, he noted. Verma also said the influx of pilgrims slowed slightly in the afternoon, but the festival continued smoothly.

He highlighted that security and management measures are in full force, with police, Jal Police, SGRF, and NDRF officials deployed across all sectors. Devotees were reportedly satisfied with the arrangements and facilities provided at the mela.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath extended greetings on Mauni Amavasya, welcoming devotees, saints, and sadhaks to the holy Sangam. In a post on X, he wished everyone new energy, enthusiasm, and resolve, praying for the fulfilment of heartfelt wishes by the blessings of Mother Ganga and Lord Surya.

The Mauni Amavasya bathing ritual, a central event of the Magh Mela, attracts millions each year, symbolising faith, purification, and spiritual renewal. Officials confirmed that the festival is proceeding in an organised manner, ensuring safety, smooth movement, and proper facilities for all devotees. The celebrations reflect the strong cultural and religious significance of Prayagraj, drawing pilgrims from across India to participate in this sacred tradition.

TN launches 'Semmozhi National Literary Award'

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Sunday announced the launch of a new national literary honour, the Semmozhi National Literary Award, while criticising political interference in the Sahitya Akademi awards. Addressing the closing ceremony of the Chennai International Book Fair 2026 at Kalaivanar Arangam, Stalin said the cancellation of the 2025 Sahitya Akademi Awards due to alleged Union Ministry of Culture intervention had caused "deep concern" among writers and cultural organisations.

Stalin described political interference in literary and artistic awards as dangerous and stressed that freedom of thought and creative independence must be protected. Responding to appeals from writers and literary bodies, the state government decided to institute the Semmozhi National Literary Award to recognise outstanding works in select Indian languages.

In the first phase, the award will cover Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Bengali, and Marathi, with each winner receiving a cash prize of ₹5 lakh. Independent juries of eminent writers and award-winning authors will evaluate entries for each language, ensuring transparency and credibility.

The Chief Minister emphasised that literature knows no borders and praised translation and copyright exchange as cultural connections between languages. He highlighted Tamil Nadu's initiatives to translate Tamil classics and contemporary works into global languages and to bring world literature to Tamil readers.

Stalin also noted the participation of publishers from over 100 countries at the book fair, calling Chennai a growing global hub for knowledge and publishing. He expressed confidence that future editions would attract greater international attention and reiterated the government's commitment to building libraries as "temples of knowledge," underscoring that language is a bridge connecting people, not a barrier.

Ex CPI (M) MLA S Rajendran joins BJP in Kerala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala BJP President Rajeev Chandrasekhar on Sunday welcomed former CPI(M) MLA S Rajendran from Devikulam into the party, criticising the "apathetic" CPI(M) and Congress governments for corruption and failing to address public issues. Chandrasekhar said Rajendran and other leaders joined BJP as they were frustrated with their inability to serve the people while in CPI(M).

With Assembly elections approaching in Kerala later this year, Chandrasekhar alleged collusion between the Congress, the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, and the Indian Union Muslim League, hinting at appeasement politics. He claimed that BJP is the only party capable of protecting all communities while delivering development and equitable opportunities.

Chandrasekhar said, "Doors are open for every leader interested in Viksit Kerala. I am happy to welcome Rajendran ji, Gurunathan ji, and Santosh to the BJP. They have been frustrated that governments led by CPI(M) and Congress have been apathetic and unable to solve people's problems."

Rajendran, on joining BJP, stated that he did so "without any conditions" and has no desire to contest elections. Chandrasekhar also criticised CPI(M) and Congress for prioritising power over governance and accused them of ignoring threats from radical groups. He urged Malayalis to unite against anti-democratic forces and safeguard the traditions and rights of all communities.

Highlighting the BJP's commitment to equality, Chandrasekhar stressed that only the party and NDA can ensure equitable development across Kerala. The remarks come amid rising political activity in the state, with the 2026 Assembly polls expected to be a major contest between BJP-led alliances and the ruling parties.

Odisha police crackdown on cattle smugglers

BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Fisheries and Livestock Minister Gokula Nanda Mallik on Sunday announced that raids were conducted across five districts following reports of an organised cattle smuggling network, leading to multiple arrests and seizure of property and cash worth over Rs 50 crore, the Minister warned that strict action would continue against those involved in the illegal trade.

"People associated with cattle smuggling will not be spared. Strict action will be taken, and anyone involved should immediately stop, or face severe repercussions," Mallik said. He added that the state government under Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi is strongly committed to protecting cows.

The Minister highlighted the Mukhyamantri Kamdhenu Yojna, under which around 80,000 farmers have benefited, and 12,000–15,000 high-yielding cows have been distributed, providing income, employment, and safety for the animals.

Last month, Chief Minister Majhi inaugurated 86 development projects worth Rs 545 crore in Koraput during the National Level Tribal Festival Parva-2025. Among these, 16 projects worth Rs 24 crore were completed, and foundation stones for 70 projects worth Rs 521 crore were laid. These include initiatives in irrigation, health centres, small industries, roads, bridges, urban hostels, additional classrooms, and forest protection buildings.

The Chief Minister emphasised that development and heritage are the government's guiding principles and encouraged farmers in Koraput to diversify into allied activities such as fish, poultry, and duck farming. Minister Mallik added that preserving and promoting the rich tribal culture of Koraput remains a priority for the state.

INFRA BOOST

Delhi CM launches Rs 100 cr projects

NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday inaugurated development projects worth Rs 100 crore in RK Puram Assembly, aiming to improve roads, community facilities, and public spaces.

The projects include road repairs, renovation of old chaupals, modernisation of community centres, park beautification, installation of open gyms, and construction of boundary walls at key locations.

CM Gupta said the BJP government, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has accelerated Delhi's development in the past 11 months after years of slow progress. She highlighted that these initiatives will enhance daily life and community infrastructure in R.K. Puram.

MP Bansuri Swaraj, MLA Anil Sharma, District President Ravindra Chaudhary, Municipal Councillor Dharamveer Singh, and local dignitaries were present during the inauguration.

The Chief Minister also recalled Saturday's launches in Shalimar Bagh, including three new Ayushman Arogya Mandirs and the Atal Canteen at Nehru Camp near Haiderpur Badli Mor Metro Station. The Ayushman Arogya Mandirs will provide free healthcare services, including doctor consultations, medicines, diagnostics, immunisation, and primary treatment, particularly benefiting women, children, and senior citizens.

CM Gupta added that the Atal Canteen will serve hot, nutritious meals at just Rs 5, ensuring food security with dignity. She said all these projects reflect the government's focus on strengthening public healthcare, nutrition, and core infrastructure, bringing tangible improvements to citizens' daily lives while promoting community welfare and development across the city.

QUICK READ

Earthquake of magnitude 4.1 strikes Afghan

KABUL

An earthquake of magnitude 4.1 struck Afghanistan on Sunday, the National Center for Seismology said. The tremor occurred at a shallow depth of 10 km, which can cause stronger shaking. No immediate reports of damage or casualties were received. The NCS shared the time and location on X. Afghanistan has seen recent quakes, including a 4.2 event on January 15 and a 3.8 tremor on January 14. The country lies in an active seismic zone.

Baloch woman goes missing, family seeks justice

BALOCHISTAN

The family of a Baloch woman allegedly taken by Pakistani security agencies has appealed for her safe return. Relatives said Fatima Muhammad Qasim was taken from her home in Hub Chowki during a late-night operation on January 13. Since then, her whereabouts remain unknown. Speaking at a press conference, the family said police and officials have given no answers. They denied any wrongdoing and urged authorities and courts to act immediately.

Taiwan reports Chinese military activity nearby

TAIPEI

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence on Sunday said it detected nine Chinese PLA aircraft sorties and nine naval vessels operating around the island. Of the aircraft, three crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's southwestern air defence zone. The military said it closely monitored the situation and responded appropriately. On Saturday, Taiwan had reported higher activity, including 26 aircraft, naval vessels, and a reconnaissance drone. President Lai Ching-te reiterated his commitment to protecting Taiwan's security.

UK PM slams Trump's tariff threats over Greenland

UK PM Keir Starmer criticises US tariff threats, stressing Greenland's status and NATO unity

LONDON

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Sunday strongly condemned US President Donald Trump's warning of tariffs against European nations over Greenland. He called the proposal completely wrong and said such pressure on allies undermines trust. In a statement shared online, Starmer said Greenland is part of the Kingdom of Denmark. He stressed that decisions about the Arctic island must rest with Greenlanders and Danes alone.

Starmer also said Arctic security concerns the entire NATO alliance, not one country. He urged member states to work together against growing threats from Russia across the region. Criticising trade pressure, he said tariffs should not be used against partners pursuing collective defence. Starmer said Britain will raise the issue directly with the US administration.

Trump had earlier threatened tariffs on the UK and other European countries unless Greenland is sold. He claimed the move was needed for national security, citing Chinese and Russian interest. Trump warned tariffs would begin at ten percent in February 2026 and rise to twenty five percent in June. He named several European nations, including Denmark, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom.

European leaders rejected the idea, saying Greenland's people have the right to decide their future. Some countries have increased military presence in Greenland, raising concerns about NATO unity. Observers warn the dispute could strain transatlantic relations and weaken cooperation at a sensitive time. However, Starmer said diplomacy and respect for sovereignty remain essential for alliance stability. He added that Britain will continue supporting Denmark while engaging Washington through dialogue. The UK government believes cooperation, not coercion, is the only way to manage Arctic challenges. Officials said unity among allies is vital as global competition intensifies in polar regions. Going forward, talks continue.

It's time to look for new leadership in Iran: Trump

WASHINGTON

US President Donald Trump on Saturday called for new leadership in Iran amid growing protests and sharp political exchanges between Washington and Tehran. Speaking to Politico, Trump criticised Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and blamed his long rule for economic collapse and public anger. He said Iran's leadership survives through fear, repression, and violence instead of respect. Trump claimed thousands had been killed to maintain control and urged leaders to focus on governing responsibly.

Trump described Iran as one of the worst places to live, saying poor leadership had destroyed the country. He accused Khamenei of failing to manage inflation, unemployment, and rising hardship faced by ordinary people. According to Trump, real leadership is based on trust, not force. He added that the United States would continue to speak out against abuses and support basic freedoms.

Khamenei responded by blaming the United States for unrest and deaths. In posts on X, he accused Trump of supporting violent groups and falsely portraying them as representatives of the Iranian people. He said such claims insulted the nation and accused Washington of encouraging unrest and instability. Tensions have risen as protests spread across Iran, driven by rising prices, job losses, and anger over governance. Rights groups report strict security measures, internet shutdowns, and mass arrests across several cities. The Human Rights Activist News Agency said protests have continued for more than three weeks. It reported thousands of deaths, serious injuries, and tens of thousands of arrests, with many cases still under review. For the first time, Khamenei acknowledged that several thousand people had died during the unrest. Analysts warn that the sharp exchange of words signals deeper hostility between the two countries. Observers fear continued escalation could further isolate Iran internationally and worsen conditions for its citizens already struggling with daily life.

'Russia planning strikes on Ukraine nuke substations'

KYIV

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said on Saturday that intelligence shows Russia planning dangerous strikes on substations linked to nuclear power plants.

He warned such attacks aim to cut electricity during freezing winter months and could trigger catastrophic nuclear safety risks. In a message shared online, Sybiha said Moscow knows no limits in trying to deprive Ukrainians of power and heat. He said Ukraine has shared intelligence with partners and urged the global community to act quickly. The minister called on the International Atomic Energy Agency and major powers to issue clear warnings to Moscow. He said strikes near nuclear supply networks would be reckless and threaten millions across the region. The warning comes as Russian attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure have increased in recent months. Moscow is accused of targeting power systems to weaken civilians during harsh winter conditions. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said there is ample information about preparations for further strikes on energy facilities. He said such attacks undermine diplomatic efforts by allies, including the United States, to end the war. Zelenskyy added

that Ukraine remains constructive in diplomacy while Russia focuses on tormenting people.

Military estimates suggest Russia has suffered heavy personnel and equipment losses since the invasion began in 2022. However, casualty figures from both sides remain difficult to independently verify. Russia's defence ministry meanwhile claimed Ukrainian forces lost over a thousand personnel in recent fighting. It also said its air defences intercepted hundreds of Ukrainian drones and missiles.

Analysts warn continued strikes on energy and nuclear-linked systems risk escalation, humanitarian suffering, and wider international consequences unless urgent restraint and dialogue prevail soon. Global observers continue monitoring developments closely amid winter pressures and rising fears across the conflict zone today.

Shallow earthquake of magnitude 3.5 strikes Myanmar

NAYPYIDAW

Myanmar experienced a magnitude 3.5 earthquake on Sunday, the National Center for Seismology (NCS) reported. The tremor struck at a depth of 65 km, causing minor shaking in the region. Earlier, on January 15, the country recorded two more quakes—a magnitude 3.3 at 45 km depth and a shallow 4.8 magnitude earthquake at 10 km, which is more prone to aftershocks.

Shallow earthquakes pose greater risks because seismic waves travel shorter distances to the surface, producing stronger ground shaking and increasing the potential for structural damage and casualties. Myanmar is located at the convergence of the Indian, Eurasian, Sunda, and Burma tectonic plates, making it highly vulnerable to moderate and large earthquakes, as well as potential tsunamis along its long coastline.

The country's 1,400-kilometre Sagaing Fault runs from the Andaman spreading centre to northern collision zones, heightening seismic hazards for major cities including Sagaing, Mandalay, Bago, and Yangon, which collectively house nearly half of Myanmar's population. While Yangon is farther from the fault, its dense population increases vulnerability, as seen in the 1903 Bago earthquake, which also affected the city.

After the magnitude 7.7 and 6.4 earthquakes in central Myanmar on March 28, 2025, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned of health threats for displaced communities, including risks of tuberculosis, HIV, and water- and vector-borne diseases.

Authorities continue to monitor seismic activity closely, urging residents in quake-prone areas to remain vigilant and follow safety protocols. The recent sequence of earthquakes highlights the ongoing seismic risk Myanmar faces due to its complex geology and dense urban populations.

6 killed, many hurt in Karachi Gul Plaza fire

KARACHI

At least six people, including a firefighter, were killed and twenty others injured after a massive fire broke out late Saturday night at Gul Plaza shopping mall in Karachi. Officials said dense smoke filled the building, causing suffocation and panic among those trapped inside. The injured were shifted to Civil Hospital Karachi, where several remain in critical condition.

Fire authorities declared the incident a third degree fire after shops and warehouses on the ground floor were completely engulfed. Flames spread up to the third floor and into the basement market, weakening the structure. Rescue teams warned the building could collapse at any time, making operations extremely dangerous. Fire tenders from across the city, along with snorkel vehicles, were rushed to the scene to rescue trapped people. Rescue officials said between eighty and one hundred people were still believed to be inside the plaza. Despite continuous efforts, firefighters struggled to enter as the blaze kept flaring even after several hours. Rescue 1122 said fire and ambulance teams were dispatched immediately after receiving alerts. Officials later confirmed around forty percent of the fire had been controlled. To support operations, the Karachi Water Board imposed an emergency at key hydrants to ensure uninterrupted water supply.

Pak energy crisis worsens as gas dues touch trillion

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's oil and gas exploration sector is facing a deep financial crisis as state run gas utilities continue to delay payments worth nearly PKR 1.5 trillion. Industry leaders warned that the growing dues are hurting production and pushing the country toward a serious energy shortage. Exploration companies have urged the federal government to step in and clear long pending payments.

Industry data shows unpaid receivables have sharply increased over the past decade. Outstanding dues stood at PKR 224 billion in June 2015 but rose to PKR 1.5 trillion by September 2025, excluding late payment charges. The Pakistan Petroleum Exploration and Production Companies Association said repeated defaults by public utilities have weakened the financial health of upstream firms.

Exploration companies supply gas to Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited and Sui Southern Gas Company. However, invoices are often not paid within the agreed thirty day period. As a result, firms have slowed development work and postponed new projects.

Pakistan currently produces about 2,684 million cubic feet of gas per day, meeting over thirty percent of national energy needs.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

7		5	2	9			8	
	2				6	3		9
8		9	5	1			6	7
	5				8	9		6
9		6	4		5		3	
	4			7		1		5
	8		3		7		9	
4		2	8			6	7	
	7			6	2			4

8	4	2	3	5	9	7	6	1
1	3	7	6	8	4	9	5	2
9	5	6	2	7	1	3	8	4
6	7	9	1	3	8	4	2	5
5	2	3	4	6	7	1	9	8
4	8	1	5	9	2	6	7	3
7	9	5	8	1	3	2	4	6
3	6	4	2	5	8	8	1	9
2	1	8	9	4	6	5	3	7

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

EU warns Trump against tariffs over Greenland issue

BRUSSELS

European Parliament President Roberta Metsola on Saturday condemned US President Donald Trump's tariff threats on European allies, saying Greenland is not for sale and its sovereignty must be respected. Responding to Trump's announcement of a 10% tariff starting February 1, Metsola stressed that measures against NATO allies would harm Arctic security and embolden shared adversaries. Metsola stated the EU stands united with Denmark and the people of Greenland, warning that no tariff threat can change Greenland's territorial integrity. Trump's post on Truth Social threatened tariffs on Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, and Finland unless Greenland is sold. He cited national security concerns, pointing to Chinese and Russian interests, and warned tariffs could rise to 25% from June 1 if no deal is reached.

Following the threat, the EU decided to pause ratification of the EU-US trade deal announced in July 2025, which aimed to reduce tariffs on US imports to zero. Siegfried Muresan, Vice-President of the European People's Party, confirmed that the ratification process would be delayed in light of Trump's statements.

French President Emmanuel Macron also condemned the US tariff threats, calling them "unacceptable" and reaffirmed France's commitment to Greenland's sovereignty. He stated Europe would respond in a coordinated manner and would not be deterred by intimidation or threats. The situation has sparked concerns about EU-US trade relations and Arctic security, as European leaders reaffirm that Greenland's future is a matter for Denmark and its people.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Pak finds poliovirus in Dec sewage samples

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan detected poliovirus in forty environmental samples collected across all four provinces and the federal capital during December, according to officials at the National Institute of Health. The polio laboratory tested one hundred and twenty seven sewage samples from eighty seven districts nationwide to check virus circulation. Officials said eighty seven samples were negative, while forty showed the presence of poliovirus.

In Balochistan, twenty three samples were collected, with two testing positive. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recorded eight positive results from thirty four samples. Punjab reported six positives out of thirty one samples, while Sindh had the highest number, with twenty three positive samples. In Islamabad, one of five samples tested positive. Samples from Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan

were all negative. Health officials explained that sewage testing helps measure vaccination coverage. Detection of the virus triggers immediate vaccination drives to stop further spread. They warned that population movement can carry the virus, but positive sewage samples show immunity gaps among children in affected areas.

In 2025, Pakistan carried out six polio vaccination campaigns, reaching more than forty five million children. The first nationwide campaign of 2026 will run from February two to eight, aiming to vaccinate over forty five million children under five. Authorities urged parents to ensure children receive polio drops during every campaign to prevent lifelong disability and protect community health nationwide effectively and sustainably. Officials said routine immunisation for young children remains free and essential to strengthen immunity levels against polio and other preventable diseases across the country year-round without interruption or delay.

QUICK READ

Cannot share data with rivals: Google to court

Washington

Google has asked a federal judge to pause an order requiring it to share search data with rivals, including OpenAI, while it appeals a 2024 ruling. The court had found Google holds an illegal monopoly in online search due to deals with Apple, Samsung, and others. Google said sharing data now could reveal trade secrets and claimed users choose its services voluntarily. The appeal is ongoing, and Google wants the data-sharing requirement delayed until a final decision.

7 in 10 professionals expect AI job changes

New Delhi

A new report reveals that 7 in 10 professionals expect significant changes in their roles due to AI in the next two to three years. The study by Genius HRTech and Digipoll surveyed 1,704 employees, showing 61% have received little guidance on using AI, while only 37% got proper training. Despite this, 67% are already using AI to simplify tasks. Many believe AI adoption is rushed, driven more by trends than business needs.

DGCA fines IndiGo Rs 22.2 cr over chaos

New Delhi

The DGCA has imposed a record Rs 22.2 crore fine on IndiGo for last month's massive flight disruptions, which stranded over three lakh passengers nationwide. The regulator also ordered a Rs 50 crore bank guarantee linked to implementing stricter flight duty norms for pilots. Senior officials received warnings, and the airline's Operations VP was removed. A panel cited IndiGo's poor preparedness and failure to follow duty rules as the main cause. The aviation ministry has launched an internal inquiry.

8.5L cooperatives serve 32 cr members in India

'Major institutions and local cooperatives are being digitised, strengthening PACS and expanding services across rural India'.

NEW DELHI

India's cooperative sector is rapidly expanding, connecting millions of people and supporting rural economic growth.

The National Cooperative Database (NCD) shows over 8.5 lakh cooperatives registered, with about 6.6 lakh currently functional, serving nearly 32 crore members across 30 sectors.

These cooperatives link milk producers, artisans, fishers, traders, and workers to markets. Women-led SHGs have brought around 10 crore women into the cooperative framework, strengthening financial and social inclusion.

Prominent institutions like Amul, NABARD, KRIBHCO, and IFFCO, alongside thousands of local societies, form a crucial part of India's economic structure. The government has approved a Rs 2,925.39 crore project to computerise functional Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) and integrate them onto a national ERP-based software platform. Each PACS receives hardware support, including computers, webcams, VPNs, printers, and biometric devices. Currently, 59,261 PACS actively use ERP software, up from 47,155 last year, while 65,151 PACS have received hardware, covering 82 per cent of the targeted 79,630 PACS.

Online audits have been completed in 42,730 PACS, with 32,119 PACS enabled as e-PACS, processing 34.94 crore transactions through 22 ERP modules in 14 languages. Additionally, 32,009 new PACS, dairy, and fisheries cooperatives have been registered, covering thousands of Gram Panchayats nationwide. PACS have been integrated with multiple central government schemes, enhancing their role as village service hubs. So far, 38,190 PACS have been upgraded to Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samriddhi Kendras, and 51,836 PACS function as Common Service Centres, providing over 300 e-services.

This rapid expansion and digitisation of cooperatives is set to further empower rural communities and boost India's inclusive economic development.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- More than 8.5 lakh cooperatives registered; 6.6 lakh functional, serving 32 crore members across 30 sectors with 10 crore women linked to cooperatives through SHGs
- 79,630 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) approved for computerisation; 59,261 PACS actively using ERP software; hardware delivered to 65,151 PACS; online audits completed in 42,730 PACS; 32,119 PACS enabled as e-PACS.
- 32,009 new multipurpose PACS, dairy, and fisheries cooperatives registered nationwide
- National Co-operative Exports Limited (NCEL) exports: 13.77 LMT worth Rs.5,556 crore to 28 countries, dividend of 20% distributed to member cooperatives.
- National Cooperative Organics Limited (NCOL) membership: 10,035 cooperatives; 28 organic products
- Bharatiya Beej Sahakari Samiti Limited (BBSSL) membership: 31,605 cooperatives
- National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) disbursed Rs.95,183 crore in FY 2024-25; Rs.95,000 crore disbursed so far in FY 2025-26.
- World's largest decentralised grain storage plan operational: godowns completed in 112 PACS creating 68,702 MT storage capacity

India's power discoms turn profitable after years

NEW DELHI

Reports a collective Profit After Tax of Rs 2,701 cr in FY 2024-25, marking a major turnaround for a sector that has remained in losses for over a decade.

India's power distribution sector has achieved a historic turnaround, with electricity distribution companies (DISCOMs) and state power departments reporting a collective net profit of Rs 2,701 crore in FY 2024-25. This marks a sharp recovery from a loss of Rs 25,553 crore in FY 2023-24 and a much deeper loss of Rs 67,962 crore in FY 2013-14, the Ministry of Power said on Sunday.

Since the corporatisation of State Electricity Boards, distribution utilities had consistently posted losses, making the latest profit a major milestone. Union Power Minister Manohar Lal described the achievement as the start of a new chapter for India's power sector, attributing the turnaround to government reforms and sustained efforts to address financial and operational challenges.

The Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme, infrastructure modernisation, smart meters, stricter financial norms, and timely tariff revisions have all contributed to better efficiency and cost recovery. Aggregate Technical and Commercial (AT&C) losses, indicating inefficiencies such as power theft and billing gaps, have reduced from 22.62 per cent in FY 2013-14 to 15.04 per cent in FY 2024-25, showing improved operational performance nationwide.

Minister Lal highlighted that the reforms are aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for India, aiming to strengthen the energy sector's role in the country's economic growth and journey toward a developed nation.

The government continues to monitor DISCOMs' performance and implement reforms, ensuring the sector remains financially healthy while meeting growing electricity demand and supporting India's expanding economy.

Delhi to host mega business expo 'Bharat Vyapar'

NEW DELHI

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) will organise the Business Expo – Bharat Vyapar Mahotsav at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi from May 1 to 4, 2026. The event aims to showcase the scale, diversity, and strength of Indian trade, manufacturing, and services under one roof. Thousands of trade federations, associations, and chambers across India are supporting the expo.

CAIT Secretary General and MP Praveen Khandelwal said over 2,000 stalls will display Indian goods, while more than 10 lakh visitors are expected to attend. With a strong business-to-business (B2B) focus, the Mahotsav will enable domestic and global trade linkages, connecting Indian traders and manufacturers with buyers, investors, exporters, importers, policymakers, and international delegations.

The expo is designed around eight thematic business zones, covering key sectors of Indian trade and industry. Its unique end-to-end product presentation model will showcase raw materials, manufacturing, finished goods, packaging, logistics, and allied services in one location. This integrated approach offers visitors a 360-degree view of supply chains, making it easier to explore partnerships, sourcing, and investment opportunities.

Advanced technology will play a key role in the event, including digital registration systems, AI-enabled matchmaking, smart exhibition layouts, and tech-driven B2B networking tools to ensure meaningful business engagements.

The Mahotsav will include participation from traders, manufacturers, MSMEs, start-ups, women entrepreneurs, and service providers nationwide. In addition to products, a wide range of services, including logistics, fintech, e-commerce solutions, export facilitation, design, branding, and technology services, will also be showcased.

The Bharat Vyapar Mahotsav is expected to serve as a strategic national and global platform, supporting the government's vision of "Vocal for Local, Local to Global" and Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Adani Solar enters global top 10 solar ranking

NEW DELHI

India's clean energy manufacturing sector received a boost as Adani Solar emerged as the only Indian firm in Wood Mackenzie's Global Solar Module Manufacturer Ranking for H1 2025. The solar arm of Adani New Industries Limited (ANIL) earned a Grade A rating and was ranked eighth globally, reflecting its strong performance in technology, supply chain resilience, and corporate responsibility.

Wood Mackenzie's report evaluated 38 crystalline silicon module manufacturers on shipments, financial health, patent activity, third-party reliability testing, and bankability. JA Solar and Trinasolar topped the ranking with scores of 91.7 and 91.6, while Adani Solar scored 81 points. The Grade A classification serves as an independent benchmark for companies meeting the highest standards of performance and transparency.

The report highlighted a diversifying solar manufacturing landscape, with representation from India, South Korea, Singapore, and the United States, though Chinese companies continue to dominate. Despite a collective USD 2.2 billion net loss among the top ten manufacturers due to steep price declines, all non-Chinese players, including Adani Solar, remained profitable by targeting premium and protected markets.

Top ten manufacturers collectively shipped 224 GW of modules, accounting for 75 per cent of global shipments in H1 2025. Adani Solar and DMEGC Solar maintained a 100 per cent utilisation rate, well above the industry average of 43 per cent, demonstrating operational efficiency and market resilience.

Adani Solar's inclusion in the global top ten ranking reflects India's growing stature in clean energy manufacturing and underscores the firm's technological capabilities and strategic focus on sustainable solar solutions.

CII sees business confidence rising ahead of Union budget

NEW DELHI

Business confidence in India is steadily rising, reflecting strong domestic demand and expectations of continued reforms in the Union Budget 2026–27, according to the latest Business Outlook Survey by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

CII's Business Confidence Index rose to 66.5 in Q3 FY26, the highest level in five quarters, marking the third consecutive quarterly increase.

The survey shows companies are optimistic about demand, profitability, and investment conditions. Around two-thirds of firms reported higher demand in Q2 FY26, while 72 per cent expect further growth in Q3 FY26, supported by GST rate cuts and festive season spending. Hiring and investment plans remain strong, highlighting industry resilience amid global challenges.

CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said the steady rise in confidence reflects the industry's ability to navigate challenges and expects growth momentum to strengthen further in coming months.

Looking ahead to the Union Budget, CII expects the government to continue reforms to sustain India's status as the fastest-growing major economy. Recommendations include high capital spending through a revamped National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) 2.0 of about Rs 150 lakh cr, focusing on ready-to-execute projects and faster dispute resolution to attract private investment.

CII also proposed an India Development and Strategic Fund to mobilise domestic and foreign capital for MSMEs, clean energy, skill development, and overseas strategic investments. To improve ease of doing business, a Rs 1,000-crore Digitisation Fund is suggested for regulatory digitisation, unified enterprise identity, and real-time compliance systems.

On innovation, CII recommended creating 10 Centres of Advanced Learning and Research, each with Rs 1,000-crore budgets, focusing on artificial intelligence, quantum technology, clean energy, and biotechnology, aiming to boost India's long-term competitiveness.

Rationalise customs duty to boost luxury car sales

PUNE

Mercedes-Benz India CEO Santosh Iyer has urged the government to rationalise customs duties on imported luxury cars to boost demand in the premium segment and raise tax revenue. Ahead of the Union Budget, he said a simpler duty structure would benefit both consumers and the industry by making high-end cars more accessible. Currently, imported cars below $40,000 attract a 70 per cent duty, while those above face 110 per cent. Iyer suggested a single slab, noting only 5–8 per cent of Mercedes-Benz sales are affected by import duties. He said rationalisation would simplify taxation and encourage premium vehicle adoption. Iyer also flagged the impact of a weakening rupee on prices, stressing stable macroeconomic policies. To offset rising costs, Mercedes-Benz plans quarterly price hikes of 2 per cent in 2026. He welcomed GST 2.0 and said better road infrastructure and intercity travel development would further support luxury car demand.

Government plans collateral-free loans for gig workers

NEW DELHI

The Centre is preparing a new microcredit scheme to provide small, collateral-free loans to gig, domestic, and informal workers, likely to launch in April 2026. The initiative aims to help workers who often lack formal credit histories access finance for essential assets such as two-wheelers and work equipment.

The scheme is expected to follow the model of the Prime Minister Street Vendors' Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM-SVANidhi) programme, which offers working-capital loans to street vendors. Under the proposed plan, beneficiaries may receive up to Rs 10,000 per year, with higher tranches of Rs 20,000 and Rs 50,000 available upon timely repayment. Interest subsidies and digital transaction incentives are also likely to be part of the programme.

Eligible workers will probably include those registered on the government's e-Shram portal, holding valid ID and a Universal Account Number. As of November 2025, the portal had over 31.38 crore unorganised workers, including more than 5.09 lakh gig and platform workers, who may be prioritised under the scheme.

The government has also revamped PM-SVANidhi to expand its reach to 1.15 crore beneficiaries, including 50 lakh new participants, extending the lending period until March 31, 2030, with a total outlay of Rs 7,332 crore. Enhancements include higher initial loan limits, a UPI-linked RuPay credit card for second-loan repayments, and expanded coverage to census towns and peri-urban areas.

A MAJOR SET BACK

Amway India loss widens to Rs 74.25 cr in FY25

MUMBAI

Amway India's losses widened in FY25, reporting a total loss of Rs 74.25 crore, up from Rs 53.38 crore in FY24.

Revenue from operations fell 10.56 per cent to Rs 1,148.16 crore, while total income, including other sources, declined 9.2 per cent to Rs 1,174.85 crore, according to data from Tofler.

Despite the fall in revenue, the company reduced several costs. Advertising and sales promotion expenses dropped 40.6 per cent to Rs 36.20 crore. Royalties paid to its US-based parent declined 15.7 per cent to Rs 55.43 crore. Payments to sole selling agents also decreased slightly by 2.73 per cent to Rs 366.91 crore. Overall, total expenses fell 7.3 per cent to Rs 1,249.10 crore.

Segment-wise, all major categories saw declines. The nutrition and wellness segment, the largest, dropped 10 per cent to Rs 703.58 crore. Personal care revenue fell 13.6 per cent to Rs 189.22 crore. Home care products slipped 2.65 per cent to Rs 120.29 crore, while the beauty segment declined 12 per cent to Rs 96.59 crore.

Amway India, a wholly owned subsidiary of Alticor Global Holdings Inc., headquartered in Michigan, remains one of the world's largest direct selling companies. The Indian arm, an unlisted entity, continues to face challenges in revenue growth despite cost-cutting measures during FY25.

OpenAI introduces $8 ChatGPT Go Plan with ads

NEW YORK

OpenAI will start testing advertisements on ChatGPT for free users in the United States while also launching a new subscription tier called "Go" at $8 per month. Ads will appear at the bottom of ChatGPT responses, clearly marked as "sponsored," and will not influence the answers provided. The "Go" plan offers upgraded features, including longer memory and more image-generation options, positioning it between the free version and the existing Plus ($20) and Pro ($200) subscriptions.

CEO Sam Altman acknowledged his past discomfort with advertising but said the move is necessary to fund AI infrastructure investments. OpenAI plans to spend about $1.4 trillion over the next eight years and expects nearly $20 billion in annual revenue by 2025. Users on Plus, Pro, and business plans will not see ads.

Advertising could be contextually targeted, such as travel promotions during trip planning, but OpenAI confirmed it will not sell user data or conversations. Users can disable ad personalisation, and ads will not appear in discussions on regulated topics like health, mental health, or politics. AI systems will block ads for users under 18.

The company aims to make ads interactive, allowing follow-up questions before purchases. OpenAI has previously added tools like Instant Checkout, enabling product purchases directly through ChatGPT, along with health and learning features.

CELEBRATING A LEGENDARY PATRIOT

TRANSFORMING RAYANNA's LEGACY INTO A LIVING HERITAGE

The Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna Kshetrarabhivriddhi Pradhikaran, established in 2016, stands as a visionary initiative dedicated to preserving and promoting the legacy of one of the Karnataka's greatest freedom fighters, Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna. The Pradhikaran was formed with the primary objective of developing Sangolli Rayanna's birthplace, and Nandagad, his native village, while creating enduring programmes that celebrate his patriotism and inspire the younger generation. To chart a comprehensive development roadmap, a Study Committee was constituted under the chairmanship of HM Revanna. The committee was entrusted with identifying key projects and activities required for the holistic development of these historic 'kshetras'. After extensive deliberations, the committee recommended several landmark initiatives aimed at cultural preservation, education, and tourism development.

Visionary development initiatives

The committee proposed the following major projects:

- Establishment of a Sainik School in the name of Sangolli Rayanna on 100 acres of land in Sangolli village.
- Construction of a Memorial Site in Sangolli to depict the childhood and formative years of Rayanna.
- Development of a Mandapam and allied structures to support cultural and commemorative activities.
- Enhancement of Veer Bhoomi at Nandagad, the sacred site where Sangolli Rayanna was laid to rest, also known for the historic Siam Nimayan.
- Comprehensive development of Rayanna's Samadhi (tomb) at Nandagad.

These initiatives are the outcome of coordinated efforts by the committee constituted under the leadership of the Hon'ble Chief Minister, reflecting the government's commitment to honouring national heroes while promoting regional development.

1 Sangolli Rayanna Sainik School: Shaping future leaders

One of the most significant achievements of the Pradhikaran is the establishment of the Sangolli Rayanna Sainik School at Sangolli in Bailhongal taluk. The well-equipped institution is run by the Sainik Schools Society under the Central Defence Department. Inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Minister, the school commenced its academic journey in 2022–23 and is now entering its sixth academic session. For the academic year 2025–26, the school successfully conducted Classes VI, VII, VIII, and IX, enrolling students from across India, including 388 students from Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka, reinforcing its growing reputation as a centre of disciplined, quality education.

2 Sculpture Park: Art meets history

A 10-acre Sculpture Park dedicated to Sangolli Rayanna and his brave associates has been developed in Sangolli village. This visually striking park, inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Minister, offers visitors a powerful artistic interpretation of Rayanna's life and revolutionary ideals. The site has quickly become a cultural attraction, drawing tourists, researchers, and literature enthusiasts keen to explore the rich heritage of the region.

3 Veer Bhoomi: A revolutionary experience at Nandagad

At Nandagad, where Rayanna and his companions once stood firm against colonial forces, the Pradhikaran has conceptualised the ambitious "Veerabhoomi Vasu Sangar Halya" project. Designed as a modern, immersive memorial set amidst a forest landscape, Veer Bhoomi blends tradition with advanced technology to create a compelling visitor experience.

Murals within the complex vividly portray Rayanna's lineage, his relationship with his wife, key revolutionary gatherings, his final rites, the Sangolli procession, and his birth in the house of Baruashta. Additional installations depict his childhood, secret military strategies, interactions with fellow revolutionaries, fierce battle scenes, the Surapura palace, and hidden caves used by Rayanna and his followers.

A living tribute to a timeless hero

With preparations nearing completion, Veer Bhoomi is set to be formally presented to the public on 19.01.2026, marking another milestone in preserving Karnataka's heroic legacy. Together, these initiatives transform Sangolli and Nandagad into vibrant centres of history, education, and inspiration—ensuring that the spirit of Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna continues to ignite patriotism for generations to come.

The project aims to immortalise Rayanna's revolutionary achievements through

- Memorial and relief sculptures
- Illustrated story panelws and information plaques
- Short films, sound-and-light effects, and devotional displays
- Robotics, dimensional cinematography, and modern visual storytelling tools

India vs NZ: Kohli's Century in Vain as Kiwis Script History

Virat Kohli's hundred couldn't prevent India's first-ever ODI series loss at home

INDORE

Virat Kohli's sublime century went in vain as New Zealand defeated India by 41 runs in the third ODI to clinch a historic 2–1 series victory, their first-ever ODI series win on Indian soil.

Batting first after losing the toss, New Zealand posted an imposing 337 for 8 in 50 overs, riding on a match-defining 219-run partnership for the fourth wicket between Daryl Mitchell and Glenn Phillips. Mitchell struck a commanding 137, while Phillips smashed a scintillating 106, completely seizing control after early wickets. India's bowlers struggled to contain the onslaught, with Harshit Rana and Mohammed Siraj leaking runs at the death despite picking up key wickets.

Chasing a stiff target, India suffered early blows as Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill departed cheaply, followed by Shreyas Iyer and KL Rahul, leaving the hosts in deep trouble. Kohli then anchored the innings with trademark composure, mixing caution with calculated aggression to register his 54th ODI century — a brilliant 124 off 108 balls.

Kohli found brief support from Nitish Kumar Reddy, who scored a fighting half-century, and later from Harshit Rana, whose aggressive fifty kept India in contention.

However, regular wickets at the other end stalled the chase as the required run rate kept climbing.

Once Kohli fell attempting a big hit in the closing stages, India's hopes effectively ended. The hosts were eventually bowled out for 296 in 48.2 overs, handing New Zealand a landmark victory.

The result marked India's first ODI series defeat to New Zealand at home and underlined the visitors' growing dominance across formats on Indian conditions.

INTER MILAN win at Udinese to fortify Serie A lead before Arsenal clash

MILAN : Inter Milan strengthened their grip on the Serie A title race with a narrow but valuable 1-0 victory at Udinese, boosting confidence ahead of a pivotal Champions League encounter against Arsenal. Lautaro Martínez proved decisive once again, scoring in the first half to secure three points that moved Inter six clear of second-placed AC Milan and defending champions Napoli. With the European competition set to resume, the win provided a timely morale lift for the Nerazzurri, who welcome Arsenal to San Siro on Tuesday. Arsenal arrive in Milan in formidable continental form, having won all six of their Champions League matches so far to top the table. Inter, by contrast, sit sixth in the standings after losing their previous two European fixtures, adding extra significance to the upcoming clash.

Mindful of the congested schedule, coach Cristian Chivu rotated his squad against Udinese, pairing teenage striker Pio Esposito with Martínez in attack. The decision paid off in the 20th minute when the duo combined to break the deadlock. Piotr Zielinski threaded a clever pass into the box, Esposito deftly backheeled the ball into Martínez's path, and the Argentine forward muscled past his marker before drilling a low shot into the bottom-right corner.

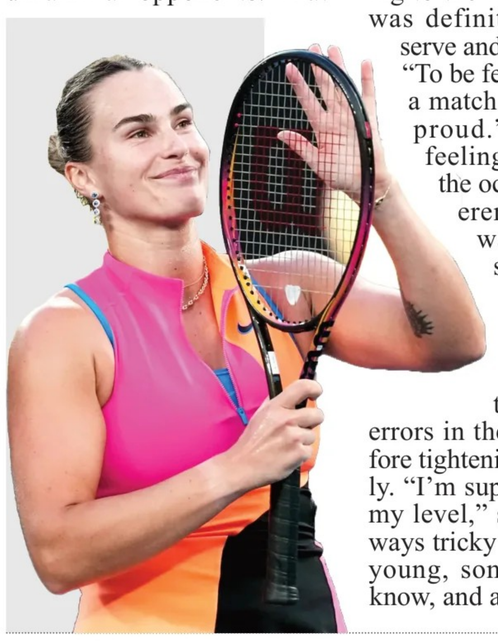
'Fearless' Sabalenka belatedly comes good to win Melbourne opener

MELBOURNE

World number one Aryna Sabalenka admitted she was far from her best but warned rivals she would only improve after launching her Australian Open campaign with a straight-sets victory on Sunday. The Belarusian top seed overcame a sluggish beginning to defeat French wildcard Tiantsoa Rakotomanga Rajaonah 6-4, 6-1 at Rod Laver Arena, keeping alive her bid for a third Melbourne crown in four years. Sabalenka, who lost last year's final, will next face either Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova or Chinese qualifier Bai Zhuoxuan. Sabalenka acknowledged that opening matches at Grand Slams can be uncomfortable, particularly against unfamiliar opponents. That was evident early on as she dropped the first game after losing the opening three points on her serve, drawing surprise from the crowd that included Roger Federer courtside.

The 27-year-old gradually found her rhythm, though the spirited world No. 118 refused to fade away. Sabalenka's error count climbed, and she was even forced to apologise after accidentally striking her opponent on the head with a forehand at 4-4 in the first set. Eventually, her power and experience told, allowing her to edge the opener before cruising through the second.

Fresh from winning the Brisbane International, Sabalenka said she has been working on expanding her game, particularly by venturing to the net more often. "I was definitely working on serve and volley," she said. "To be fearless and do it in a match makes me really proud." She admitted feeling the pressure of the occasion, with Federer and Rod Laver watching from the stands, but was pleased to have settled after a nervy start. Sabalenka committed 13 unforced errors in the opening set before tightening up significantly. "I'm super happy I found my level," she said. "It's always tricky playing someone young, someone you don't know, and a left-hander."



Spectators sweat in long lines as ground pass sales paused amid security,

Australian Open: Fans frustrated by long queues, ticket sales halt on day one

MELBOURNE

Australian Open organisers faced sharp criticism on the opening day of the season's first Grand Slam on Sunday as hundreds of fans were left frustrated by long queues, heightened security checks and confusion over the sudden suspension of ticket sales at Melbourne Park.

With security tightened following last month's Bondi Beach shooting in Sydney, spectators were subjected to additional screening, leading to lengthy lines outside the venue in hot conditions. Matters were compounded when tournament officials paused sales of the popular and cheaper "ground pass" tickets within the first hour of play due to overwhelming demand. Ground passes, priced at A$65 (about $43) for day sessions, offer access to the outer courts and are traditionally a major draw for fans on the opening days.

Tournament director Craig Tiley later confirmed that only premium tickets for the main showcourts were available during the morning session, but many fans remained unaware of the situation as they queued for extended periods.

Josh Main, a visitor from the Netherlands attending with his family, described the experience as disappointing. "We went to look for tickets but there was a big line, so I thought, are we in the right line?" he told. "They told us there are no tickets left, so we can't get in. The only option was Rod Laver Arena tickets, which were very expensive."

Local fans echoed similar sentiments. Melbourne resident Elton Yu said he was taken aback by the unavailability of ground passes. "I never expected there to be no ground pass tickets, which I usually buy," he said.

Susan Walsh, who already held arena tickets, said her group had hoped to enter earlier. "We were told only tickets costing $229 per person were available. We didn't want to spend that much, so it was disappointing," she said.

Tiley later clarified that the sales halt applied only to the Sunday day session, adding that evening "After 5" ground passes, priced at A$49, remained available. Tennis Australia did not respond to requests for comment, as organisers worked to ease concerns on a tense opening day.

Wollaston wins again to tighten grip on Tour Down Under lead

ADELAIDE

New Zealand's Ally Wollaston delivered another powerful statement at the Tour Down Under on Sunday, storming to a second consecutive stage victory to retain the ochre leader's jersey heading into the final day of racing. Wollaston produced a blistering late sprint to overhaul defending champion Noemi Ruegg in the uphill finish at Paracombe, capping a dramatic 130.7km second stage raced in sweltering South Australian heat. The FDJ United–Suez rider timed her effort perfectly, reeling in Ruegg (EF Education–Oatly) just metres from the line after the Swiss rider appeared set for victory. The back-to-back stage wins give Wollaston a 14-second lead in the general classification over England's Josie Nelson (Team Picnic PostNL), who continued her consistent form with another podium finish in third place on the stage. Ruegg sits third overall, a further three seconds adrift, keeping the overall contest finely balanced going into Monday's finale.

Canada's Olivia Baril (Movistar Team) is fourth overall, while Poland's Marta Lach (Team SD Worx) rounds out the top five after another demanding day in the saddle.

Sunday's win marked Wollaston's third career stage victory at the Tour Down Under and followed her commanding sprint triumph in Saturday's opening stage at Willunga. Despite struggling for position earlier in the race, Wollaston said she found renewed belief late on.

"I found it hard to move up today, but in the last 10 kilometres something just switched on mentally," she said.

Davis Riley leads Sony Open after strong finish through three rounds

HONOLULU

Davis Riley surged into the lead at the Sony Open with a composed late charge, carding a 3-under-par 67 to sit atop the leaderboard after three rounds at Waialae Country Club.

Riley reached 12-under 198 and will take a two-shot advantage into Sunday's final round of the PGA Tour's season-opening event. After a shaky start that included bogeys on two of his opening three holes, the American steadied himself and finished strongly, playing the final seven holes in 4 under par.

"I just started feeling really good with the swing and I was hitting my start lines," Riley said. "That's the biggest thing in this wind — controlling the ball flight and curvature."

Riley's closing stretch featured consecutive birdies at the 14th and 15th holes, followed by another birdie at the par-4 18th. The performance underscored his growing comfort in blustery conditions that

again tested the field.

Chris Gotterup (68), Kevin Roy (69) and England's Harry Hall (66) share second place at 10 under, while Ryan Gerard (68), England's John Parry (69) and defending champion Nick Taylor of Canada (70) sit three strokes back. Riley, a two-time PGA Tour winner whose most recent victory came at the 2024 Charles Schwab Challenge, admitted early-round tension played a role in his slow start. "I was forcing it a little bit early and trying to be perfect," he said.

Wind remained the dominant theme across the course, with players describing constantly shifting gusts that complicated club selection and shot-making. Gotterup said his approach for the final round would remain unchanged, focusing on patience and execution.

Among the notable movers, Corey Conners of Canada and Japan's Hideki Matsuyama posted the best rounds of the day with matching 65s. Veteran Vijay Singh, 62, continued his impressive week with a 68 to move to 4 under, while Belgium's Adrien Dumont de Chassart slid down the leaderboard after a 73.

With challenging conditions expected again, Riley will look to rely on the same composure that carried him into the lead.

Sonmez becomes fan favourite in Melbourne after coming to aid of ball girl

MELBOURNE

Turkish qualifier Zeynep Sonmez won admiration from fans at the Australian Open on Sunday not only for her tennis but also for her compassion, after she rushed to help a ball girl who fainted during her first-round match in oppressive heat.

The world No. 112 was engaged in a hard-fought contest against 11th seed Ekaterina Alexandrova and was waiting to receive serve in the second set when the incident occurred. Positioned near the chair umpire, the ball girl suddenly wobbled and fell backwards, briefly managing to stand before stumbling again.

Sonmez immediately stopped play and sprinted across the court to assist. As the crowd applauded warmly, the 23-year-old put the girl's arm over her shoulder and guided her to a chair, allowing medical staff to step in and provide treatment.

The interruption appeared to briefly disrupt Sonmez's momentum, and she went on to drop the second set. However, showing resilience and focus, she regrouped to secure a memorable 7-5, 4-6, 6-4 victory, sealing her place in the second round at Melbourne Park. In doing so, Sonmez made history by becoming the first woman from Turkey to reach the second round of the Australian Open in the professional era. The win added another milestone to what has already been a breakthrough period in her career.

Sonmez's success in Melbourne follows an impressive 2025 season in which she reached the third round at Wimbledon, the best Grand Slam performance by a Turkish woman in the Open Era. She also advanced to the second round of the US Open, underlining her steady rise on the WTA Tour. While her on-court achievement was significant, it was Sonmez's sportsmanship that truly captured the hearts of those in attendance. In a tournament often defined by fierce competition, her instinctive act of kindness provided a powerful reminder of the human side of sport, earning her widespread praise and a new legion of fans in Melbourne.

Bangladesh seeks ICC approval to swap groups, move T20 WC matches to Sri Lanka

DHAKA

Bangladesh has formally asked the International Cricket Council (ICC) to swap its group with Ireland and relocate its matches to Sri Lanka for the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, citing security concerns. The request was made by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) during a meeting with ICC representatives.

Bangladesh is currently placed in Group C alongside the West Indies, Italy, England and Nepal, with its fixtures scheduled in Kolkata and Mumbai. Ireland, meanwhile, is in Group B with Sri Lanka, Australia, Oman and Zimbabwe, and their matches are slated for Colombo and Pallekele.

In a statement issued after the meeting, the BCB said it had reiterated its formal request to move Bangladesh's matches to Sri Lanka and shared the Bangladeshi government's concerns regarding the safety and security of players, fans, media personnel and other stakeholders.

> Bangladesh formally requests group swap with Ireland to avoid playing T20 World Cup matches in India

The ICC delegation included Andrew Ephgrave, General Manager of the Integrity Unit, who attended in person, and Gaurav Saxena, General Manager for Events and Corporate Communications, who joined virtually after failing to secure a Bangladesh visa in time. The ICC team sought to reassure the BCB about security arrangements in India and urged adherence to the original schedule.

From the BCB's side, president Mohammad Aminul Islam, vice-presidents Md Shakawath Hossain and Faruque Ahmed, cricket operations chairman Nazmul Abedeen, and CEO Nizam Uddin Chowdhury were present.

However, it is understood that the ICC remains reluctant to accommodate Bangladesh's demand due to logistical challenges and the significant changes required to the tournament itinerary at this stage.

The BCB's concerns intensified after pacer Mustafizur Rahman was delinked from his IPL contract with Kolkata Knight Riders following a BCCI directive. Former Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal has urged the board not to take an emotional decision and to consider long-term implications.

Despite the impasse, the BCB said discussions were conducted in a constructive manner, with both sides agreeing to continue dialogue, including exploring the possibility of a group change to minimise disruption.

ICC T20 WC: Eng's Pak-origin players get visas, others soon

NEW DELHI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has facilitated visa clearances for England's Pakistan-origin players while assuring that remaining cases involving players and officials of similar background will be resolved shortly ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 in India.

In the England squad, spinners Adil Rashid and Rehan Ahmed, along with pacer Saqib Mahmood, are the players of Pakistan lineage. It was learned that visas for all three have already been cleared, providing an early boost to England's preparations for the global event beginning February 7.

The ICC's intervention covers a total of 42 players and officials of Pakistan nationality or origin across several participating nations. These include teams from the United Arab Emirates, the United States of America, Italy, Bangladesh, Canada and the Netherlands, highlighting the diverse representation of players of Pakistani descent in both full-member and associate sides.

Members of the Netherlands squad have already received their visas, while Canada staff member Shah Saleem Zafar has also been granted clearance. For other teams, visa arrangements are currently underway, with appointments scheduled for early next week. January 31 has been set as the final deadline for visa issuance for all tournament participants.

The governing body has remained in constant communication with Indian High Commissions across multiple countries to ensure that applications are processed efficiently and without undue delays. According to sources, the ICC has received assurances that pending cases will be handled smoothly within the stipulated timelines.

Visa applications involving Pakistan-origin applicants typically attract additional scrutiny, resulting in longer processing times. Acknowledging this, the ICC has proactively coordinated with relevant authorities to preempt any last-minute complications.

With clearances progressing as planned, the ICC believes that all teams will be logistically prepared well before the tournament gets underway. The council views the successful processing of visas as a crucial step in ensuring the smooth conduct of the T20 World Cup, amid heightened focus on security and administrative readiness.

Daryl Mitchell creates new record, becomes first batter to achieve rare ODI feat

New Zealand star scripts history with five successive 50-plus ODI scores against India

INDORE

New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell etched his name in the record books on Sunday (January 18) by becoming the first batter in the world to score five consecutive 50-plus innings against India in One-Day Internationals played on Indian soil. The milestone came during the third ODI of the ongoing three-match series at the Holkar Stadium. Batting at No. 4, the 34-year-old right-hander from Hamilton brought up his half-century in style, striking a boundary off Kuldeep Yadav on the final delivery of the 21st over. Mitchell reached the landmark in 56 balls, underlining once again his remarkable consistency against India in their own conditions. Mitchell's sequence of scores against India in ODIs played in India now reads an astonishing 130, 134, 84, 131 not out and 51 not out. No batter before him had managed more than four successive 50-plus scores in such matches. Legends such as Chris Gayle, Damien Martyn, Andrew Symonds and AB de Villiers had previously shared the record with four consecutive scores of fifty or more.

Currently ranked No. 2 in the ICC ODI batter's rankings, Mitchell has developed a reputation as one of the most reliable overseas performers in India, adapting seamlessly to different pitches and bowling attacks. His ability to rotate strike and accelerate when required has made him a cornerstone of New Zealand's middle order.

Among New Zealand batters, Mitchell's run places him just behind Kane Williamson in terms of consecutive 50-plus scores against India in ODIs. Williamson had scored five successive half-centuries against India in 2014, albeit not all in India.

Sania Mirza points to systemic gaps in Indian tennis

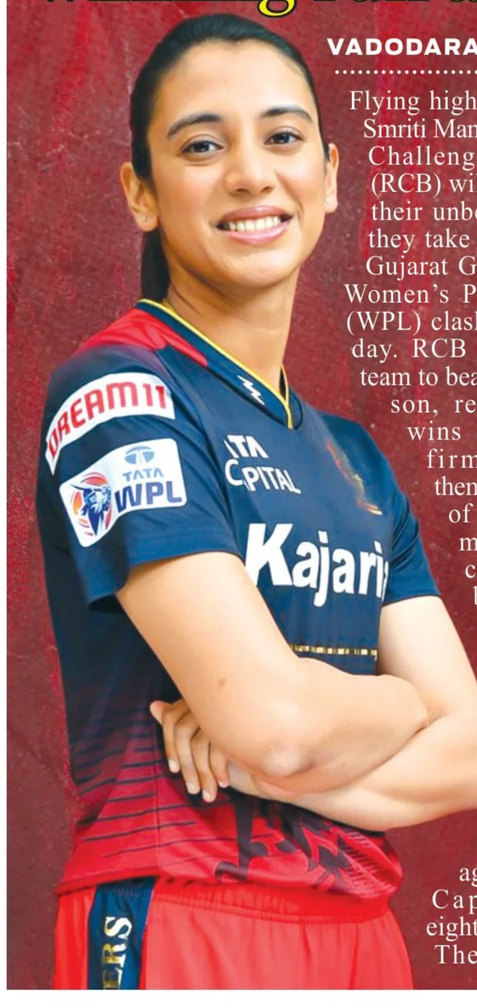
NEW DELHI

Indian tennis icon Sania Mirza has flagged deep-rooted structural shortcomings in the country's tennis ecosystem, lamenting the absence of a clear, sustainable system to consistently produce top-level players across generations.

As the 2026 tennis season gets underway with the Australian Open around the corner, India once again finds itself without representation in the singles draw. While Yuki Bhambri and Niki Poonacha will feature in the men's doubles, the complete absence of Indian women in both women's and mixed doubles has only reinforced the void left by Mirza's retirement.

The six-time Grand Slam champion, who will return to the expert panel for the Australian Open broadcast, said the current scenario is unfortunate but not surprising. According to Mirza, elite players do not emerge overnight, and success at the highest level demands long-term planning, commitment and robust systems. Mirza observed that India's legendary players — including herself, Vijay Amritraj, Ramesh Krishnan, Leander Paes, Mahesh Bhupathi and Rohan Bopanna — all rose through individual pathways rather than a structured national framework. "We have all made it big individually, not because of a system," she noted, adding that this reality remains unchanged even today. She pointed out that hopes were pinned on Sumit Nagal to provide sustained singles representation, but injuries derailed his progress, exposing the lack of depth behind him.

In-form RCB look to continue winning run against sliding GG



VADODARA

Flying high on confidence, Smriti Mandhana-led Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) will look to extend their unbeaten run when they take on a struggling Gujarat Giants (GG) in a Women's Premier League (WPL) clash here on Monday. RCB have been the team to beat so far this season, registering four wins on the trot to firmly establish themselves at the top of the table. Their momentum received a further boost on Saturday when Mandhana returned to form in emphatic fashion, smashing a match-winning 96 against Delhi Capitals in an eight-wicket victory. The RCB batting unit has fired collectively. While opener Grace Harris has provided brisk starts without converting them into big scores, Georgia Voll stepped up with an unbeaten 54 in the last match. The middle order looks solid with the presence of hard-hitting wicketkeeper-batter Richa Ghosh, Nadine de Klerk, Gautami Naik and all-rounder Radha Yadav, giving the side both depth and flexibility. RCB's bowling attack has been equally impressive. Pacers Lauren Bell and Sayali Satghare have provided early breakthroughs, while spinners Shreyanka Patil, Prema Rawat and Yadav have kept things tight in the middle overs. Adding to their confidence is a 32-run win over GG in their first meeting this season at Navi Mumbai just two days ago. Gujarat Giants, meanwhile, have endured a dip in form after winning their opening two matches. Led by Ashleigh Gardner, GG now find themselves third on the table following consecutive losses. Despite boasting a formidable batting line-up featuring Beth Mooney, Sophie Devine, Gardner, Georgia Wareham and Bharti Fulmali.

Tata Steel Masters: Erigaisi outplays Praggnanandhaa, Gukesh settles for draw

WIJK AAN ZEE

Top seed Arjun Erigaisi made an emphatic start to his Tata Steel Masters campaign with a convincing victory over compatriot R Praggnanandhaa, while World Champion D Gukesh had to be content with a hard-fought draw against Uzbekistan's World Cup winner Javokhir Sindarov in the opening round on Sunday. After a delayed start due to a brief protest by environmental activists, the world's oldest running super tournament finally got underway, and the first round delivered plenty of drama for chess fans. Erigaisi, Germany's Vincent Keymer and American Hans Moke Niemann emerged as the early pace-setters, sharing the lead on a full point, half a point ahead of Gukesh and seven others. Erigaisi's win stood out for its precision and authority. Facing a Queen's Gambit Accepted against a familiar opponent in Praggnanandhaa, the 21-year-old capitalised on an early middlegame error. Praggnanandhaa's king remained stranded in the centre, and Erigaisi calculated accurately to mount a decisive attack on the weakened monarch. The game was effectively over by move 32, underlining Erigaisi's growing maturity at the elite level.

Gukesh, playing Black, came close to joining his compatriot in the winners' circle but could not convert a promising position against Sindarov.

Zverev overcomes sluggish start to win Australian Open first-round match

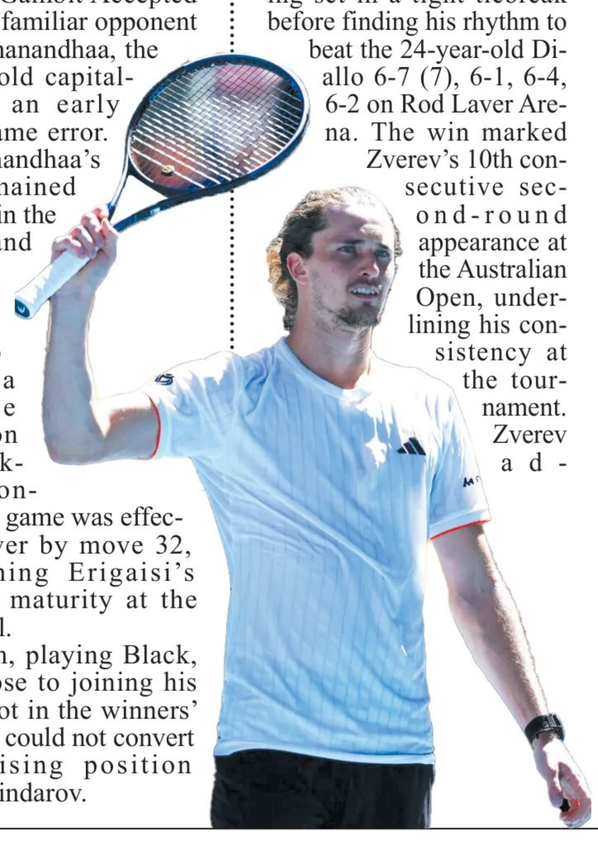
MELBOURNE

Third-seeded Alexander Zverev shook off a slow opening to launch his Australian Open campaign with a confident four-set victory over Canada's Gabriel Diallo as the season's first Grand Slam got underway on Sunday. The German, runner-up at Melbourne Park last year, dropped the opening set in a tight tiebreak before finding his rhythm to beat the 24-year-old Diallo 6-7 (7), 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena. The win marked Zverev's 10th consecutive second-round appearance at the Australian Open, underlining his consistency at the tournament. Zverev admitted he was wary of the challenge posed by Diallo, ranked No. 41 in the world. After struggling with his timing in the first set, the German leaned on his powerful serve and superior court coverage to seize control of the contest. Once he broke early in the second set, the momentum swung decisively in his favour.

"I wasn't too happy when I saw the draw," Zverev said afterward, praising Diallo's aggressive style. "The first set wasn't my best tennis, but after that it got a lot better."

Earlier on the main show-court, seventh-seeded Jasmine Paolini set the tone for the day with a dominant 6-1, 6-2 win over Aliaksandra Sasnovich. The Italian wrapped up the opening set in just 27 minutes and maintained her intensity throughout, pleased with her focus in the opening match of a Grand Slam.

There were mixed fortunes elsewhere. Italy's Flavio Cobolli became the first seeded men's player to exit, losing to British qualifier Arthur Fery, while Francisco Cerundolo and Corentin Moutet advanced in straight sets. On the women's side, Elina Svitolina and Maria Sakkari also progressed comfortably.



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